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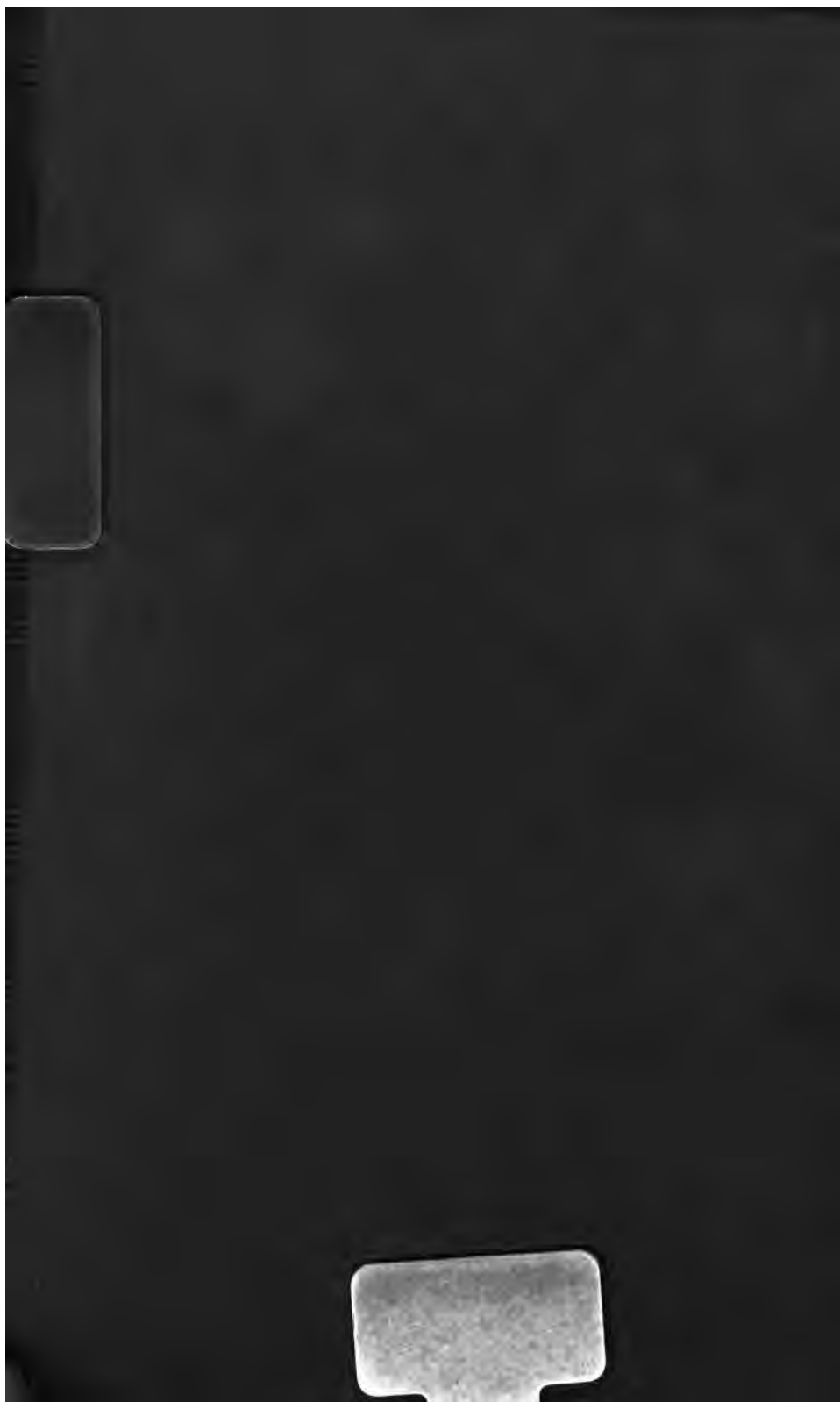
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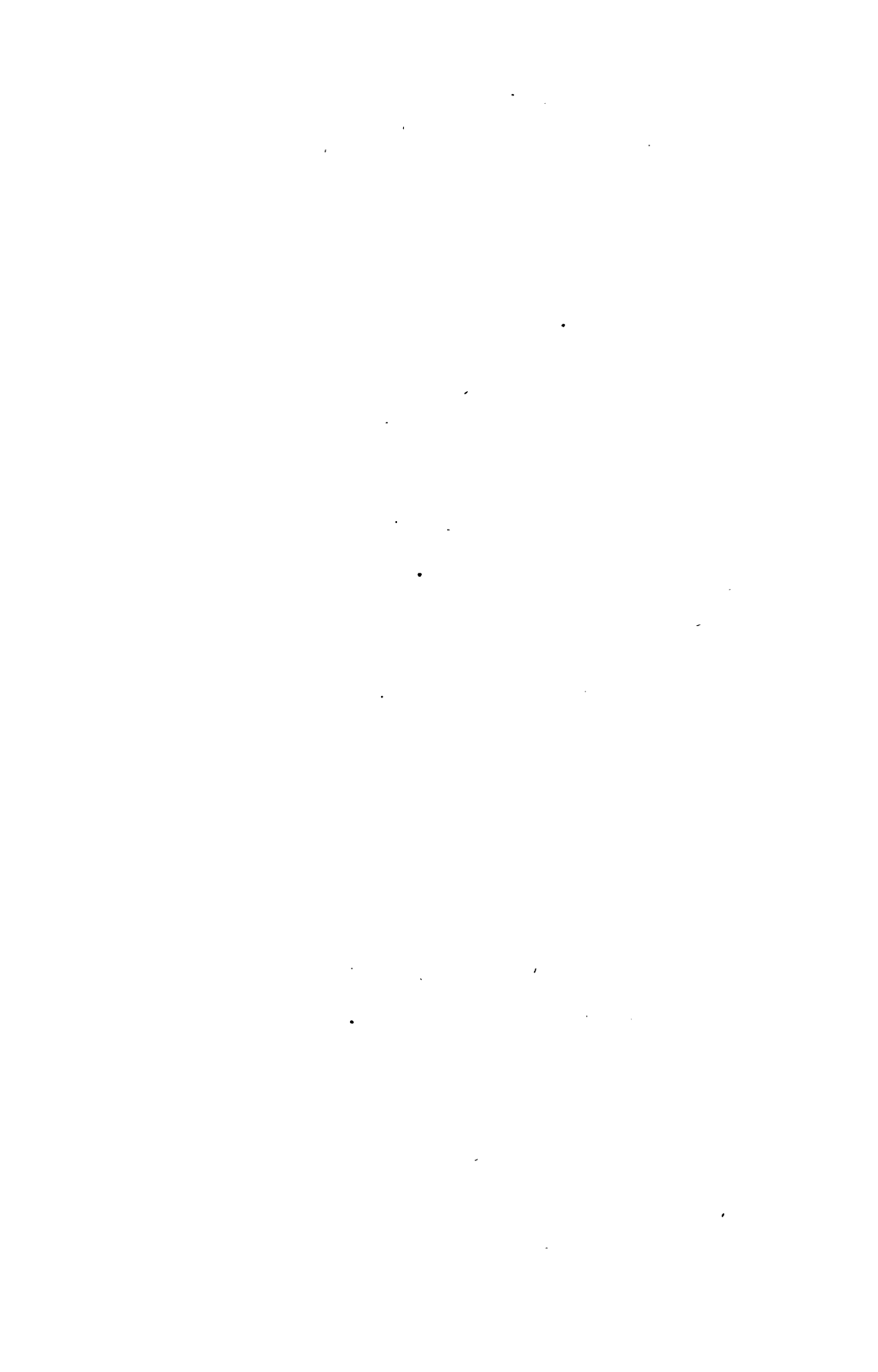
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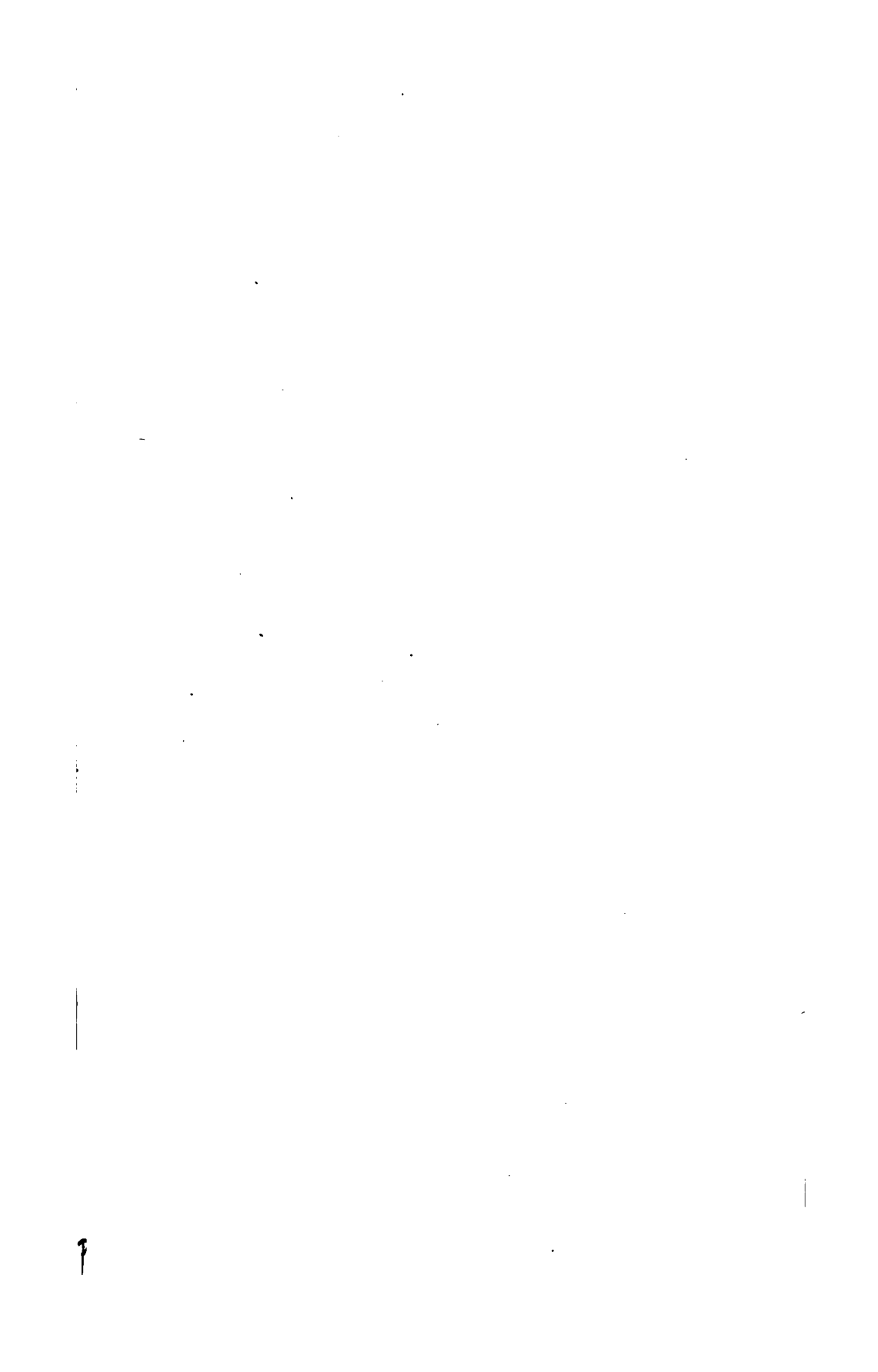
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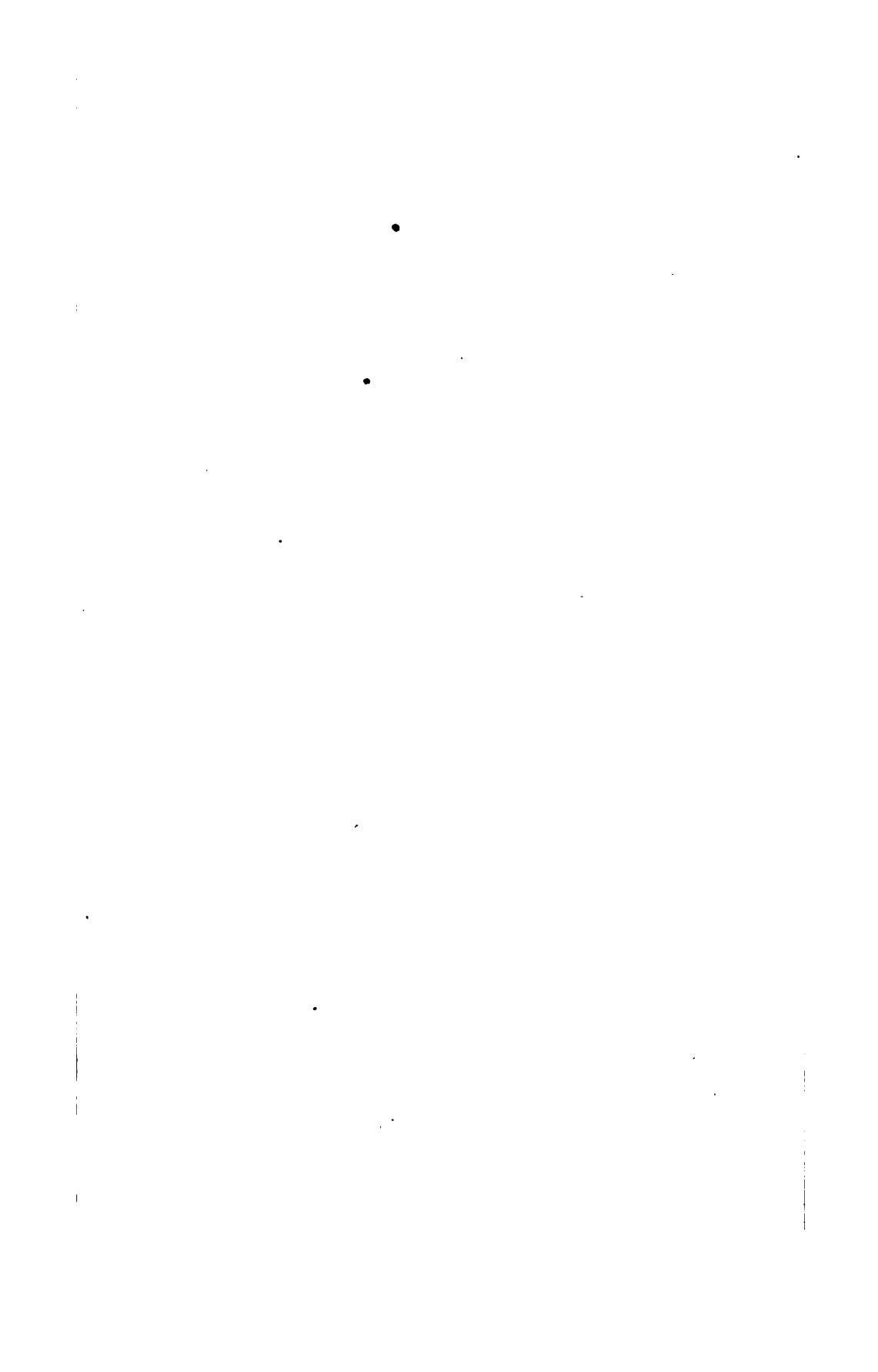














SERMONS,
FOR
PAROCHIAL AND DOMESTIC USE.

VOL. I.

VOL. I.

A



SERMONS,
FOR
PAROCHIAL AND DOMESTIC USE,
DESIGNED TO
ILLUSTRATE AND ENFORCE,
IN A CONNECTED VIEW,
THE MOST IMPORTANT ARTICLES
OF
CHRISTIAN FAITH AND PRACTICE.

BY
RICHARD MANT, D. D.

RECTOR OF ST. BOTOLPH'S, BISHOPSGATE, AND DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO HIS
GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY; AND LATE FELLOW OF
ORIEL COLLEGE.

“ I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and
“ him crucified.” 1 Cor. ii. 2.

“ To preach practical sermons, as they are called, that is, sermons upon
“ virtues and vices, without inculcating those great scripture truths of re-
“ demption, grace, &c. which alone can incite and enable us to forsake sin,
“ and follow after righteousness; what is it but to put together the wheels,
“ and set the hands of a watch, forgetting the spring, which is to make
“ them all go?” (Br. HORNE.)

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VOL. I.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF ARTS

ARTS AND SCIENCES DIVISION

PH.D. THESIS

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ARTS AND SCIENCES DIVISION

TO THE REVEREND
JOHN EVELEIGH, D. D.
PROVOST,
AND TO
THE FELLOWS,
OF ORIEL COLLEGE:
IN TESTIMONY OF
GRATTITUDE AND RESPECT
FOR THE SOCIETY;
AND OF
AFFECTIONATE ATTACHMENT
TO MANY OF ITS
INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS;
THE FOLLOWING SERMONS
ARE INSCRIBED
BY THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND
AND SERVANT,

R. M.



P R E F A C E.

AMONG the modern theological publications of the national Clergy, the number perhaps is not great of such as are adapted to the purposes of parochial and domestic instruction. It is in consequence of this opinion, which I suppose to be not confined to myself; and from having experienced the utility of works of this description, that I have been induced to make the present attempt for adding to their number, by a collection of plain discourses on some of the most important Articles of Christian Faith and Practice.

The foregoing observation will explain the general character and pretensions of these volumes, and prepare the reader for what he may expect in them. Originally composed for the instruction of my own parishioners, they are now offered to the public, with the view, not in any degree of assisting the researches of the theological Student, but of promoting the advancement of ordinary Christians in the "wisdom" which is "unto salvation."

In selecting and preparing these sermons for publication, considerable regard has been had to the choice and arrangement of the subjects. Each sermon, with one or two exceptions, is independent of the others; and is intended to give a distinct view of the subject, of which it treats. At the same time they all succeed each other, so as to afford a general and, I hope, not a very defective survey of the scheme of our salvation; of "the inesti-

“ mable love of almighty God the Father
“ of mercies, in the redemption of the world
“ through our Lord Jesus Christ : of the
“ means of grace, and of the hope of glory.”

As to the occasions on which they were written, it may be convenient to the reader if I mention, that, besides several which are adapted to the proper lessons, epistles, and gospels of certain Sundays, the 4th sermon (on the Divinity of our blessed Lord) was composed with a particular view to the service of the Church on Christmas-day ; as was the 14th (on the existence and nature of the Holy Ghost) to the festival of Whitsunday. Bishop Jeremy Taylor's advice on this point has always appeared to me highly worthy of regard : “ Let every Preacher,” he says, “ in his parish take care to explicate to “ the people the mysteries of the great “ festivals : because these feasts containing

“ in them the great fundamentals of our
“ faith, will with most advantage convey
“ the mysteries to the people, and fix them
“ in their memories by the solemnity and
“ circumstances of the day.” A similar
motive led me to the subject of the 5th
and four following sermons; which were
first delivered on the evenings of Passion-
week in a parish, of which I then had the
cure, and in pursuance of a practice, that
had been piously and laudably introduced
by the Rector, for the purpose of keeping
up a more religious observance of that
solemn season. As they now appear, they
have undergone some slight alterations, to
fit them for the general purposes of this
publication: at the same time I venture
to express a hope, that they may furnish
appropriate subjects for meditation to any
one, who may be disposed to distinguish
by more than usual religious exercises the
season, for which they were designed.

As to the principles of these sermons, I would observe, that it appears to be the gracious design of almighty God, our heavenly Father, by the Gospel to bring men from a sinful and lost condition to happiness, by the way of holiness:—happiness, purchased by the precious blood of the incarnate Son of God for those, who through an active faith in his merits repent of their sins, and sincerely and diligently labour to obey him:—and holiness, conferred by the Holy Spirit of God on those, who will conscientiously practise the appointed means of grace. To be the instrument of promoting this holiness as the means, and this happiness as the end, by an assiduous preaching of “Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” and by a careful exposition of the distinctive doctrines and precepts of his religion, should be the endeavour of every Minister of the Gospel. To promote these objects should be the aim of every sermon. I trust it will be

found, that I have never lost sight of them in the following discourses: but that the truths of the Christian faith are so proposed, as to be made the foundation of Christian practice; and that the duties inculcated are of such a character, and are enforced by such motives, as become the followers of Christ.

Since writing the foregoing paragraph, my attention has been drawn to a passage in one of the admirable and instructive Charges of Abp. Secker: which is so much to my purpose, and so accurately enumerates the chief subjects of the following discourses, almost in the very order of my arrangement, that I shall take the liberty of transcribing it. “To improve your parishioners effectually to their future happiness, you must be assiduous in teaching the principles, not only of virtue and natural religion, but of the Gospel; and of the Gospel, not as al-

“ most explained away by modern refiners,
“ but *as the truth is in Jesus*^a; as it is
“ taught by the Church, of which you are
“ members; as you have engaged by your
“ subscriptions and declarations, that you
“ will teach it yourselves. You must
“ preach to them faith in the ever-blessed
“ Trinity: and vindicate, when it is requi-
“ site, those parts of our Creeds and Of-
“ fices, which relate to that article, from
“ the very unjust imputations of absurdity
“ and uncharitableness which have been
“ cast upon them. You must set forth
“ the original corruption of our nature:
“ our redemption, *according to God’s eter-
“ nal purpose in Christ*^b, by the sacrifice of
“ the cross: our sanctification by the in-
“ fluences of the Divine Spirit, the insuffi-
“ ciency of our own good works, and the
“ efficacy of faith to salvation.” These
doctrines, he presently adds, we must

^a Eph. iv. 21.

^b Eph. iii. 11.

“ preach fully and frequently : yet so, as
 “ to reserve always a due share of our dis-
 “ courses for the common duties of com-
 “ mon life, as did our Saviour and his
 “ Apostles. But then we must enforce
 “ them chiefly by motives peculiarly Chris-
 “ tian ; I will not say, only by such ; for
 “ the scripture adds others. And while
 “ we urge on our hearers the necessity of
 “ universal holiness, we must urge equally
 “ that of their *being found in Christ ; not*
 “ *having their own righteousness, which is*
 “ *of the law, but the righteousness, which is*
 “ *of God by faith*.”

It is necessary for me to add, (and the
 acknowledgment may serve as an useful
 hint to some of my younger brethren in
 the Ministry, into whose hands this publi-
 cation may chance to fall,) that in com-
 posing these sermons assistance has been

* Phil. iii. 9. First Charge at Canterbury, p. 216, 218.

occasionally derived from the treasures of sound theology, contained in the works of some of our most valuable Divines. The judicious Prelate, to whom I just referred, observes on this point: "I would have
" young Clergymen, especially, make very
" great use of the works of able Divines :
" not inconsiderately and servilely tran-
" scribe them ; but study, digest, contract,
" amplify, vary, adapt to their purpose,
" improve, if possible, what they find in
" them. For thus it will fairly become
" their own ; mix naturally with what pro-
" ceeds altogether from themselves ; and
" preserve their youthful productions from
" the imputation of being empty and je-
" June^d." For my own part, I have found the adapting of an ancient sermon to modern use to be at once an interesting and a profitable occupation : and I am persuaded, that those specimens of it, which form parts

^d Abp. Secker's Third Charge at Canterbury, p. 269.

of the present collection, are the most valuable of its contents.

It may be satisfactory to the reader to be informed, that the substance of the 7th, 9th, 14th, and 15th sermons is for the most part the property of Bp. Andrewes; that a considerable portion of the materials of the 1st, 24th, and 25th, was supplied by Bp. Beyeridge; that the statement of the argument for universal Redemption in the 5th, is taken from Isaac Barrow, and for the Divinity of our Saviour in the 4th, from the late Rev. W. Jones's Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity; that the 11th is abridged and altered from Joseph Mede; and that the general plan of the 29th was suggested by the Homily on the fear of Death. Of any other important obligations I am not sensible; but it is by no means improbable, that I have been sometimes indebted to a favourite author for some course of thought or turn of ex-

pression, without being at present able to recollect, and even without having been at the time aware of, the source, from which it was derived. If I have thus enriched my own compositions, and made them more “profitable for instruction in Christian righteousness,” I doubt not that the authors, could they be sensible of it, would rejoice in becoming, even in this way, “the Ministers of God for good,” and would “forgive me this wrong.”

May the following discourses be sanctified both to the writer, and to the reader or hearer, by the operation of the Holy Spirit on our hearts! And so may they redound to the glory of our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

COGGESHALL VICARAGE,

Oct. 26, 1812.

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And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized ? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

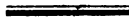
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SERMON I.

COMPARATIVE VALUE OF THE WORLD AND OF
THE SOUL.

MATT. xvi. 26.

What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

THERE are two sorts of objects, decidedly at variance with each other, which divide between them, but not in equal degrees, the affections and the pursuits of mankind. They may be indifferently described, as “the things above,” and “the things on the earth:” as the things “of the Father,” and “the things of the world^b:” as “the lusts of the flesh,” and the desires “of the Spirit^c:” as the gratifications of

^a Col. iii. 2.

^b 1 John ii, 16.

^c Gal. v. 17.

the sensual, or natural, part of man ; and as the delights of his spiritual part, that is, of his soul.

Of these things it is evident, that they are in opposition to each other. They cannot consist together ; for they are in nature essentially different. They cannot be sought together ; for a progress towards the attainment of one description of them, carries a man as many degrees farther from the other. They cannot exercise divided dominion over the heart, and be served with partial affection and allegiance : for he, who “ loves the one, will hate the other ;” he who “ holds to the one, will despise the other ^d.” Upon this irreconcilable hostility between these different objects of pursuit proceed the declarations of Scripture, that “ the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other ^e :” —its admonitions, that we “ set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth ^f :” —and its cautions, that we

^d Luke xvi. 13.

^e Gal. v. 17.

^f Col. iii. 2.

“love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” For “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him^s.”

It is also evident, (I fear that the experience of every man will too readily incline him to assent to the proposition,) that the practice of mankind at large is not regulated by those cautions and admonitions, to which I have just alluded; but that the balance of numbers is greatly on the side of those, who “love the things that are in the world;” and in consequence against those, who “set their affection on things above:”—that the multitude of men, who are “carnally minded,” greatly surpasses the sum of those, who are “spiritually minded;”—that, in short, they who care about the world, are much more numerous than they who care about their own souls. The zeal, the activity, the prudence, the diligence, the watchfulness, the perseverance, with which men in general prosecute their temporal interests: and, on the other hand, the listlessness, the in-

^s 1 John ii. 15.

dolence, the carelessness, the thoughtlessness, with which, occasionally only and with long and frequent interruptions, they look to the welfare of their souls; are a melancholy indeed, but an irrefragable testimony to the character of those desires, which predominate in the human heart in general: and confirm the declaration of our blessed Saviour, a declaration, as alarming as it is true, that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light"^h."

Whether this preference of the things of the world over the welfare of the soul, be wise or foolish: whether it be in any degree worthy of a being, endowed with reason, and freedom of choice; a being, capable of discriminating between good and evil, and of regulating his conduct by a regard to that which is the greater good: is a question, the answer to which must be determined by the answer to the inquiry, proposed by our Saviour in the text: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or

^h Luke xvi. 8.

what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" If the things of the world be really the more profitable; if they be really worth the sacrifice of our spiritual welfare and prosperity, which we make in order to their attainment: let us then continue to act the part, which nature dictates and reason must approve; let us pursue with indefatigable vigour, and having attained let us enjoy with unremitting indulgence, the things that are in the world: let us do nothing but "pull down our barns and build greater;" let us "clothe ourselves in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day;" let us take our fill of the gratifications of sense, and "eat, drink, and be merry." But if, on the contrary, the "gain of the whole world," could we procure it, would be really of no solid profit at all, and no more than dust on the balance when weighed against the worth of the "soul:" and if, although it be no difficult matter to lose the soul for the world, yet all the riches and pleasures of the world, "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," could not suffice to redeem the soul, nor be

taken in exchange for it, when it is once lost : what man or woman, nay what child amongst you, can hesitate in determining to which the preference should be given ; and whether we, if we make any pretensions to the character of rational creatures, should labour to possess ourselves of the things of the world, or to secure the salvation of our souls ?

By " the world," of which our Saviour speaks in the text, you cannot doubt what is generally intended. By it, you know, is intended that world, wherein we live, and which men in their corrupt state are apt to admire, and value, and love, and desire, and seek. It is thus that the beloved disciple St. John uses the word, when he says, " Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." And lest his meaning should be mistaken, he presently adds a short catalogue of those things which the world contains, and which he exhorts us to avoid ; " For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the

world¹.”—“The lust of the flesh;” namely such things as please and delight the flesh, and which the flesh therefore lusteth after:—“the lust of the eyes,” or earthly riches, which, as separated from carnal pleasures, only please the eye, so that it lusteth after them, although, as the wise man observes, “it is never satisfied with them².”—and lastly “the pride of life,” or that imaginary grandeur and honour of this life, which fill men with pride and self-conceit: these are the particulars, that compose the world, of which our blessed Lord is speaking in the passage at present under our thoughts: and these are the particulars, which engage the affections, and are deemed worthy of the pursuit, of the great majority of men.

Now suppose a man to be occupied in the pursuit of one or all of these objects, and at length to become master of his desires: (and yet this is to suppose much more than experience renders probable; for which of us has not reason to be assured, that the voluptuary and the sen-

¹ 1 John ii. 16.

² Eccles. iv. 8.

sualist often " travail with pain¹;" that he that heapeth up, as well as " he that withholdeth more than is meet, tendeth to poverty;" and that the ambitious are often " filled with shame rather than with glory"²?) still supposing the worldly man to succeed in his endeavours; nay, supposing him, as he is supposed by our Saviour in the text, to " gain the whole world;" of how little real value is the acquisition, even when considered absolutely by itself; how incomplete is the enjoyment, how short is the duration of the enjoyment, which the world, and all the things that are in the world, can give!

There are many other considerations, but these, I apprehend, are the two most conclusive, to shew the unprofitableness of worldly acquisitions. They are unsatisfactory; and they are of short continuance.

For who is the man, that has given himself up to the pursuit of worldly riches,

¹ Job xv. 20.

² Prov. xi. 24.

³ Hab. ii. 16.

pleasures, or honours; and has ever considered himself to have attained the summit of worldly happiness? He that "loveth silver," saith the wise man, and what he affirms of covetousness, is equally true in its application to voluptuousness and ambition, to the lust of pleasure and of power, as well as to a thirst for money: "he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this also is vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?" The desires of the human heart are equal in extent to its capacity. But it is capable of enjoying more than all that this world can bestow, even God himself, who made it. It is impossible therefore, that any thing, or all the things in this world, should fill our souls, and limit our desires. That which is recorded of a celebrated conqueror, that when he had marched with his victorious army to the boundaries of the earth, he sighed for more worlds to conquer, contains a moral,

° Eccles. v. 10, 11.

applicable to the case of every worldly man. Though you were to attain every object of your fondest wishes; though every thing, which you now comprise within the compass of your desires or hopes, were to be heaped upon your head; though you were to gain the whole world, with all its riches, pleasures, and honours; the whole world and all that is in it would not suffice to appease the longing and craving of your soul. Having conquered one world, you would be uneasy and restless for the acquisition of another. New wishes would arise in your hearts: new hopes and new desires would urge you on towards fresh objects of enjoyment; still regardless of the remonstrance of the prophet, and incredulous to the truth of that sentence, which you are at the same time confirming by every day's experience, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

But supposing the enjoyments of the world to be more satisfactory than they

* Is. lv. 2.

really are, still they are of short continuance: for if they do not, as Solomon says of riches, "make themselves wings, and fly away¹," whilst life continues; still with life itself all the enjoyments of it cease. "We brought nothing into this world," nothing of worldly splendour or distinction, "neither can we carry any thing out." "Naked came we out of our mother's womb; and naked shall we return," wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked; "and shall take nothing of our labour, which we may carry away in our hand²." A few brief years, and what will be the condition of him, "who now trusteth in his wealth, and boasts himself in the multitude of his riches?" His inward thought "is, that his houses shall continue for ever, and his dwelling places to all generations: and he calls his lands after his own name. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after

¹ Prov. xxiii. 5.

² Eccles. v. 15.

him." Surely it is a consideration, which might be expected, if no other could, to open the eyes of the worldly man upon the vanity and unprofitableness of his pursuits; that "in all points as he came, so shall he go; and then," as the wise man emphatically puts the question, "What profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?"

The answer to the question is, He hath no profit at all. The world and its enjoyments, imperfect as they are and transitory, are, when considered only by themselves, absolutely of little value. But much is even that little value diminished, in the estimation of him who compares it with the value of the soul; with the excellence of the delights which may be attained by the spiritual part of man.

The excellence of such delights, and therein the value of the soul, appears from two considerations, opposed to those, which

* Ps. xlix. 6, 11, 12, 17.

† Eccles. v. 16.

shew the insignificancy of worldly things. These delights are perfect in their kind, and eternal in their duration.

It is the assertion of an Apostle, that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And great undoubtedly is the blessing, which the soul, devoted to God and his service, enjoys in this life, infinitely surpassing all the gratifications of the sensual part of man; from being rendered capable by divine grace of triumphing in some degree over its hereditary corruption and inclination to evil; from being blest with peace in the well-founded hope and belief that its sins are forgiven; from being made "partaker of the divine nature";* from continually advancing in the imitation of the purity and perfection of God; from continually improving in the knowledge of the Godhead; and enjoying more and more communion with him. These are the blessings, which godliness confers upon

* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

* 2 Pet. i. 4.

the soul of man: blessings of the same nature as those which alone are capable of satisfying a spiritual substance: and no despicable step towards that "perfect consummation and bliss," which is to be enjoyed by it in "the life that is to come."

For it is to that life that we are chiefly to have regard in appreciating the value of the soul, and the excellence of the delights, to which it may be admitted. It is then, when the vanities of this world shall have passed away, and the hope of the future shall have been swallowed up in fruition, that the soul shall find her happiness complete. Then shall she be divested of "the corruptible body, which now presseth her down," and be "clothed upon with incorruption:" then shall she be purified from the alloy of mortality: then shall she see the Creator "face to face," and be admitted to a full and perfect knowledge of the divine nature: then shall she "be abundantly satisfied with the plenteous-

† 1 Cor. xv. 53. ‡ Cor. v. 4.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

ness of thy house, O God; and thou shalt make her drink of the river of thy pleasures^a.”

And as the delights of the soul shall be perfect in their kind, so also shall they be unbounded in their duration. It is indeed one of the most striking characteristics of that felicity, which “God hath prepared for” the souls of “them that love him,” that like the years of himself, who is the author and giver of it, it shall never fail. “For which cause we faint not,” saith the triumphant Apostle, exulting in the contemplation of an eternity of heavenly bliss: “but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal^b.”

^a Ps. xxxvi. 8.

^b 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18.

These considerations of themselves might be sufficient to guide us in our choice, between the things of the world, and the things that belong to our spiritual welfare. For what rational and reflecting mind could hesitate, between the empty gratifications of a few short years, and the solid substantial delights of an everlasting existence? And who must not instantly condemn the judgment, which could prefer the "gain of the whole world," if it were attainable, to the happiness prepared by God for the souls of the righteous?

But there is another point of view, wherein the inquiry of our Lord is to be considered. For "what is a man profited," he asks, "if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It is not barely a question, between the pleasures of the world and the pleasures of heaven: between sensual gratifications, and the happiness of the soul. But it is a question also between the gain of the world, and the "loss" of the soul; a loss, which comprehends not only the privation of everlasting happiness, but the positive

suffering of misery eternal. For our Saviour having virtually told us by his question, that a man is *not* profited, though "he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul," immediately adds, as the reason for his assertion, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his work." Hence it is manifest that he speaks of that "loss of the soul," with which men shall be punished at the day of judgment; when they, who have been more anxious to gain the world than to save their souls, shall be condemned, both soul and body, to that "everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels;" where, as Christ himself tells us, "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" where their own consciences shall be always tormenting them, and shall never be pacified; where the fire of God's wrath shall be always burning in their breasts, and shall never be abated; where they shall be continually harassed by the fiends of hell; where they shall be tormented with the remembrance of their former sensual sins

infinitely more than they were before delighted with them; where they shall have nothing that is good, nothing that is pleasant, nothing that is convenient, nothing so much as tolerable or easy to them, but every thing that can disturb and vex them to the heart; where, as the Apostle speaks, they shall be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power^c ;” where they shall have a clear and lively apprehension that almighty God, their Creator, is angry and displeased with them, and resolved never to be reconciled to them; and by consequence where they shall be fully assured, that “this shall be their portion,” their bitter portion, “for ever.”

This is the mournful condition of a “lost soul:” and the soul, that is condemned to such a condition as this, is lost indeed; for it is lost and undone to all eternity. And this is what our Saviour means by a man’s losing his own soul; when he is not anxious to preserve it from eternal misery and torment. Here therefore recurs

^c 2 Thess. i. 9.

with increased emphasis the inquiry of our Lord, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" an inquiry, my brethren, to which you will be then best prepared to reply, when you shall have "communed with your own hearts" upon the nature and the particulars and the duration of that loss, which has been just suggested to your thoughts; and to which the souls of the worldly-minded and the ungodly will be irrevocably condemned at the last day.

But if a man hath gained the whole world, although he hath lost his soul, cannot he purchase his freedom, and redeem his soul again from bondage? It cannot be, my brethren; it is impossible. For, as our Saviour argues, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Shall he give the whole world? Supposing that it once was, it now no longer is, his to give. But if it were, to whom would he give it? Would he give it to God? It is his already. Would he give it to the Devil, by whom he is tormented? It was he, who gave him the world for his soul; and

who therefore (he may be assured) will never give him his soul back again for the world. But indeed the world, "the whole world," is not a sufficient ransom for the soul of a man. Could it have been redeemed by any inferior price, the eternal Son of God would not have come down from heaven, and suffered death for its redemption. Such was the purport of David's observation: "There be some that put their trust in their goods, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches. But no man may deliver his brother," nor his own soul, "nor make agreement unto God for him: for it cost more to redeem their souls, so that he must let that alone for ever^d." And, as St. Peter says, "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb, without blemish and without spot^e." If then the soul be once lost, it is lost for ever. As long as it continues in the body, Christ is able and willing to redeem and save it. But when it has once undergone the sentence of condemnation, misery and tor-

^d Ps. xlix. 7, 8.^e 1 Pet. i. 18.

ment become its unfailling portion, and the hope of redemption is no more. Christ will not redeem it: the world cannot. A man may have sacrificed his soul to gain the world, but it is not in his power to give the world in exchange for his soul.

Such then being the comparative value of worldly and spiritual enjoyments: and such being the loss, which will be sustained by those who give up their souls for the world; a loss which all the things upon earth can neither compensate, nor repair: what are the objects, to which a rational being, who has, and who knows that he has, a soul to be saved, ought to direct his affections and his endeavours? Ought he to desire, and labour to procure, the unsatisfactory, the transitory things of the world; and so renounce the perfect, the never-fading joys of heaven? Ought he to set his affection upon, and exert himself to gain, the things on the earth, and so rest contented with the thought of being tormented for ever, without the possibility of redemption, in the flames of hell? Is

there any principle even of selfish policy and prudence in such conduct as this? Is it not to counteract the dictates of self-love, the most active stimulant in the heart of man? Is it not to violate the law of self-preservation, the first and most constant law of nature? Is it not to raise the hand of destruction against ourselves; to become our own murderers; to devote ourselves, both body and soul, to death, everlasting death? "I speak as to wise men," my brethren; "judge ye what I say."

But if ye judge what I say to be the truth, (and no one, who believes the word of God, will venture, I think, to dispute it,) be not satisfied with acquiescing in the truth of it, as a barren unprofitable speculation; but let me pray and beseech you all to apply it to your practice; and as you acknowledge the incalculable value of your souls, so to make the welfare and salvation of them the prime object of your concern. Let the wisdom and diligence of "the children of this world" be your example in the pursuit of heaven. Are not they careful to prevent any loss in their tem-

poral affairs? Be ye equally careful for your souls: take heed that they be not lost for ever.—Do not they make it the object of their daily study, how they may promote their worldly interests? Let your souls be as constantly the object of your solicitude: suffer not a day to pass without considering, how you may most effectually “work out your salvation,” and “make your calling and election sure.”—Do not they studiously avoid whatever may impair their fortunes, diminish their profit, or prevent its augmentation? Be ye equally solicitous for the security of your souls: forsake or avoid whatever will injure, whatever will destroy them: flee from wickedness, for “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”—Do not they often examine and make up their accounts, to see what progress they are making in the world? Be ye equally watchful for the improvement of your souls in holiness: “examine yourselves” often, “whether ye be in the faith;” and see whether you “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—Do not they eagerly grasp at every opportunity for increasing their

possessions, and bettering their condition in the world? Let the prosperity of your souls be promoted with equal diligence; let not an opportunity escape of improving your spiritual state, and fitting yourselves for heaven, by diligent attendance on the word of God; by constant and devout prayer for his mercy and grace; by faithful communion in that blessed sacrament, whereby you may be made partakers of Christ's body and blood, and therein of the merits of his death, by whom alone your souls can be saved. Do these things, my brethren, with a stedfast and active faith in his meritorious sacrifice, and "your souls shall live."—But will ye rather slight or reject the gracious admonition of your Redeemer? Will ye still set your affection upon the things on earth, not on things in heaven? Will ye still endeavour to gain the world, and neglect the welfare, the everlasting welfare of your souls? Now indeed ye may be "wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own sight:" now ye may "call evil good, and good evil;" ye may "put darkness for light, and light for darkness;" ye may "put bitter for sweet,

and sweet for bitter:" now ye may " say to your souls, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry : " but hereafter ye will be wofully convinced of the grievousness of your error, when it shall be too late to correct it : and when ye shall learn by melancholy experience, that " it profiteth a man nothing, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ; and that there is nothing, which a man can give, in exchange for his soul."



SERMON II.

THE GOSPEL THE ONLY FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS
AND MORAL DUTY.

1 COR. iii. 11.

*For other foundation can no man lay, than that
is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

IN every building it is above all things necessary, that attention be paid to the foundation on which it rests. If a house be “built upon the sand,” it will fall before the violence of the contending elements; if it be built and “founded upon a rock,” though “the rain descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon that house, it will fall not;” but will survive their fury, an honour to the builder, and a defence and protection to

him who takes shelter under its cover. The holy scriptures compare man as a moral agent to a master-builder: and our blessed Lord, who employs the similitude, especially directs our thoughts to the analogy in this particular, by teaching us that in the moral, as well as in the material edifice, as is the foundation so will be the building. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand." By which we learn, that it is on the truths, which we are taught by Jesus Christ, and on them alone, as on a safe and sure foundation, that a secure edifice can be erected. To build on him, is to "build upon a rock;" not to build on him, is to "build upon the sand:" to build on him is to attain that object, without which all building were ineffectual—safety and permanency; to build otherwise than on him, is to expose the edifice to be involved in hasty and inevitable ruin.

It is the uniform language of the Holy Spirit in his revealed word, that whatever benefits are derived to men through their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are derived to them exclusively through him. He is the foundation, and there is none else: for "other foundation can no man lay." Would we know what is our duty? Would we know the principle, on which we are to practise it? Would we have grace to perform it? Would we wish that our performances should be accepted by almighty God, and that atonement should be made for the manifold "sins, negligences, and ignorances," for which after all we shall have to account? For each and for all of these things, we must have recourse to Christ, and to Christ alone: Christ, and Christ alone, can teach us our duty; can place the performance of it on a right principle; can enable us to do it; can recommend our services to almighty God; and atone for our manifold imperfections. By a detailed examination of these particulars, I propose with the divine blessing to illustrate and confirm the Apostle's position in the text, that "other foundation

can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

And 1st, Jesus Christ is the foundation on which we are to build, inasmuch as it is from him alone, that we procure a knowledge of our duty. Of men in their natural state, unenlightened by the day-spring from on high, it is emphatically said by the Apostle, that they "knew not God^a:" and proud as man may be of the discoveries of reason, and of the extent to which philosophy has been advanced, yet as to the knowledge of religion and of sound morality, the times of natural reason have been the times of ignorance. Look to the opinions and practices of man, not blessed with the light of revelation: look to him, not only in a savage state, but in a state of superior civilization and refinement: look, not only to the conduct and tenets of individuals, acting under the influence of their own partial views of things and their own favourite inclinations, but to the deliberate decisions of the most grave moralists and lawgivers, to the pub-

^a 1 Cor. i. 21.

lic and authorized actions of large societies and nations: and you will perceive how imperfect is the knowledge of his duty possessed by the natural man. The history of every nation of antiquity; the narratives of every discovery, which has been made in the modern ages of the world; conspire to prove the same truth: but why need we refer to distant times or places? since in the present refined age of boasted science and illumination, we have witnessed a neighbouring people renouncing the worship of the only true God, and raising altars to the pretended goddess of reason: and have in our own country heard the highest commendations bestowed on a philosopher, who was engaged in the nefarious attempt to confound all right and wrong, by justifying suicide and extenuating adultery.

Not such are the instructions as to the duty of man, which are vouchsafed us by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Beyond the power of unaided human reason to discover, of reason vitiated by sin, and deprived of the faculty originally bestowed upon it

of discerning clearly the will of God, they are agreeable to reason when revealed to it. There may be indeed, and we know there are, pretenders to superior wisdom, who think they can perceive in the Christian code of duty precepts, not consistent with the attributes of the divine Lawgiver, and not calculated to promote the welfare of man. Would to God that the experiment could be duly made! Would that men could be persuaded to "love God; because he first loved them^b;" to believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and to "love one another, as he gave them commandment^c!" What a glorious superstructure might we not expect to see arise from such and so solid a foundation! Like "that great city, the holy Jerusalem," which the beloved disciple saw "descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God^d," the visions of heavenly felicity would then be realized upon earth. There should "in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever

^b 1 John iv. 19.^c 1 John iii. 23.

10, 11.

^d Rev. xxv.

worketh abomination, or maketh a lie:" but "mercy and truth should be met together, righteousness and peace should kiss each other." He, who formed the foundation, should himself also be "the light thereof;" and the whole earth should be filled with the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea. When the Gospel was first preached to mankind, the conscientious observance of its precepts, practised by those who then professed it, drew from the admiring heathen that glorious testimony to "the beauty of holiness," Behold, how these Christians live! There can be no other cause assigned, why the same glorious testimony is not repeated as widely as the religion is professed, but that the lives of its professors do not correspond with its commandments! that the building is not worthy of the foundation!

Secondly: "other foundation can no man lay than Jesus Christ," because by him alone are we instructed in the right principle, on which our duty is to be performed. What are the principles, which

• Rev. xxi. 27. † Ps. lxxxv. 10. • Rev. xxi. 23.

the world holds forth, whereby to actuate our conduct? Honour, custom, expediency: erroneous, and inconstant as human opinions, from which they derive their sanction. He, who is influenced by such principles as these, will one moment love and desire, what the next he will hate and abhor: will to-day pursue with the keenest avidity, what to-morrow he will as eagerly avoid. Besides, these principles being of a worldly character, they must partake of that depravity, which belongs to every thing that is of the world. "The whole world lieth in wickedness^b:" a principle, which originates in what is essentially corrupt, cannot be holy.

The principle, which Christ inculcates upon his disciples, as the ground-work of their conduct, is the love of God. "God manifested his love towards usⁱ," as by other manifold instances of his good will, so more especially by "sending his Son" to die for our salvation. And because God so loved us, therefore we are exhorted to "love Him," and therefore also to "love

^b 1 John v. 19. ⁱ 1 John iv. 9.

one another^k." A sense of affectionate gratitude to God is the principle, on which the whole duty of a Christian is established. This is the foundation of his religion: this is no less the foundation of his morality. Can any principle be so firm? can any be so pure? Unlike the fluctuating principles of the worldly man, it is always stedfast, and incapable of misleading by a recommendation of contradictory or inconsistent practices. As with God there is "no variableness neither shadow of turning," the same things must always be pleasing or displeasing in his sight. That which was agreeable to him, that which was offensive to him, yesterday, must be, will be the same to-day, to-morrow, and for ever. It is only necessary then to ascertain, what is pleasing or what is displeasing to God; and whilst we seek the former and avoid the latter, we cannot err. Honour may dazzle; custom may mislead; expediency may perplex us; and neither honour, nor custom, nor expediency will at all times support us in the discharge of our duty: but his "feet are set upon a rock,"

^k 1 John iv. 19, 11.

whose "goings are ordered" by a desire of doing the will of a perfect and unchangeable, of an infinitely wise and holy Being. Again: unlike the principles of the world in another important respect, what motive of human conduct can be so pure, as a grateful affection towards God? "God is love!" saith the beloved disciple; distinguishing in an especial manner that attribute of the divine nature, which was most signally manifested in the redemption of a lost world. And human nature is never more exalted and improved, than when it partakes most largely of the quality, which is (as it were) identified with God; when with the most devout affection "we love him, because he first loved us*."

Thirdly; Jesus Christ is the only foundation, on which we can build, because, as we are indebted to him for the knowledge both of our duty, and of the principle on which it is to be done, so also we derive from him the power of doing it. Together with a loss of our original righteousness, a want of the power to recover

* 1 John iv. 8.

† Ib. 19.

the righteousness we had lost, entered into our nature by the disobedience of Adam. Weak as well as sinful, in consequence of our descent from a fallen progenitor, and receiving infirmity, as well as corruption, in part of our inheritance; "we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves." We are not able to turn unto God of our own natural ability: we are not able of ourselves to do good works pleasant and acceptable unto God: but we must have the grace of God to prevent, or go before, us, that we may have a good will to do such works; and to work with us when we have that good will. For the enjoyment of this preventing and assisting grace, we are indebted to Jesus Christ. It is He who sendeth us the Holy Spirit, by whom we are regenerated, and renewed, and sanctified, and strengthened, and enlightened, and comforted: by whom we are enabled to "repent and believe the Gospel;" and to "add unto our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to tempe-

* Collect for 2d Sunday in Lent.

° 10th Article.

rance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." In short, whatever powers are conferred upon us by the communion of the Holy Spirit, either to the avoiding of evil or the performance of good, they are conferred of the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;" who, when he had completed what was necessary to be completed by him in his own person here on earth, went up into heaven there to be our advocate with the Father, and sent down his Holy Spirit to be another advocate and comforter, and to abide with us for ever. "Without me," said he, "ye can do nothing."

And this leads me to remark, in the fourth place, that Jesus Christ is the only foundation on which we can build, inasmuch as it is He who renders our services acceptable to almighty God. Notwithstanding the weakness of our nature be strengthened and supported by the divine grace, no service, that we can offer, is of itself worthy of being received by infinite perfection. The sacrifice which ought to

be offered to him, if it would claim acceptance with him, is a sacrifice without blemish. But what is the human offering, that can aspire to this distinction? What is the offering, that we can make, which is not debased by much unworthy mixture, whether of thought, word, or deed? Whose heart, if diligently communed with, will venture to reply, that no mixture of unworthiness is blended with the motives, which prompt him to the service of God; or with the manner, in which that service is performed? Whose heart will not tell him, that there is much in it, which renders it unfit to appear before an infinitely holy God? To render the offering of such a heart an acceptable sacrifice, there is needed the mediation of one, who knows not and never knew sin. In Christ Jesus is that mediation found. He made a propitiation for us, by dying for us upon earth: he maketh intercession for us in heaven, where he ever sitteth for that purpose on the right hand of God. He formerly submitted to be our victim, the sacrifice for our sins, when he shed his

most precious blood upon the altar, the altar of his cross, to redeem us from the penalty, which our disobedience deserved: he now ever liveth above as our high-priest; receives our worship and other offerings to almighty God; clothes them, imperfect as they are, with his own perfect righteousness; pleads for them, undeserving as they are, his own all-sufficient merits: and so makes them acceptable unto his Father. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins*." He is the foundation on which we must build our hopes, that our sins will be forgiven, our services accepted, and ourselves admitted into favour by God.

Christ Jesus then being the foundation, the only foundation, on which we are to build; let us inquire in conclusion whether we build upon him in the several particulars, that have been now passing under our view.

* 1 John. ii. 1, 2.

And first; is our practice regulated by that perfect law of religious and moral duty, which Christ hath set before us in the Gospel? Do we submit ourselves—our souls, and bodies—our thoughts, words, and deeds—to the Christian commandments? Do we yield to their authority an unreserved, an unqualified, an universal obedience? Are they the maxims of the world, the mere discoveries and imaginations of man in his natural condition, to which we look for our guidance in the passage through this mortal state? or are they the precepts of Him, who came down from heaven, to teach us to perform, and to set us himself in his human character the example of performing, the will of our heavenly Father? Let us not deceive ourselves by supposing, that a regard to those rules, which the world lays down for the regulation of human conduct, will be sufficient to guide us in the right path of duty. Often those rules are inconsistent with the precepts of the Gospel:—often they are in decided and avowed opposition to the Gospel:—at the best they are incomplete and defective; insisting upon some points of

little or no real importance; omitting others, which are essential and indispensable to our well-being. The rules being faulty, the conduct which is regulated by these rules must be also erroneous and imperfect. What is the foundation, which in this particular we endeavour to lay? The precepts of the world; or of the Gospel? of Satan, or of Christ? This is a leading consideration, if we would build our house upon a rock.

2dly. What is the principle, which we choose, as our actuating motive? Is it of heaven or of earth? Is it love for our heavenly Father, exerting itself in an earnest desire to please him, and springing from a grateful sense of his manifold mercies vouchsafed unto us, especially in the redemption of the world by his Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ? or is it a desire to please men rather than God; an anxiety to stand fair in the estimation of others, an obsequious acquiescence in prevailing opinions and practices, leading us to "follow the multitude" whithersoever they go before; a disposition to bring every thing down

to the level of certain rules of fancied expediency? Is it our principle of conduct, to go resolutely and steadily forward in the prescribed line of our duty, because that Being, whom infinitely above all others we are bound to love and to serve, hath commanded it? or is it our principle to qualify our obedience, to temporise in our conduct, out of love and respect to that world, "the friendship of which is enmity with God?" My brethren, "love not the world; neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The two principles, you see, are opposed to, and incompatible with, each other. "You cannot serve," you cannot love, "God and mammon." Whether of the two do you prefer? Here again, will you build upon the rock, or upon the sand?

3dly. In the execution of our duty, on what foundation do we build our hopes, that we shall be able to perform it? Sinking under hereditary weakness, and encom-

passed with infirmity on every side, do we rely upon our own imaginary strength to support us in the hour of trial, or do we humbly depend upon the divine grace, upon strength and succour from above? Weak as well as wicked, the natural man must sink before the assaults of his spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil: whilst he, who is "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," is able "to withstand the wiles of the devil" and all the powers of darkness, and "having done all to stand." "God resisteth the proud; but giveth grace to the humble." To him, who in a lowly consciousness of his own feebleness and danger beseeches supernatural assistance, Christ replies in his holy word, as he did heretofore more openly to the Apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Is it our own weakness, or the all-sufficient grace, the perfect strength of Christ, to which we look for our defence? Do we sincerely feel, that the Holy Spirit of God must "prevent

¹ Eph. vi. 10, 11.

² 2 Cor. xii. 9.

us in all our doings and further us with his continual help," if we would run the way of his commandments? Do we gratefully acknowledge, that the foundation of our hopes is in the divine grace, and that "except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it?"

Lastly; after all that by the grace of God we have been enabled to do, on what foundation do we rest our hopes, that our services will be accepted by God? Is it upon any value, which those services possess of themselves? Is it upon any goodness of their own, whereby they can be recommended to the Almighty? Is it upon any merit, which belongs to them, whereby they can claim to themselves the divine approbation? or, renouncing all claim to righteousness, all pretension to merit on our own parts, do we trust our cause to the perfect righteousness, to the unbounded merits, of Christ? Who will presume to say that he is without sin? "If he saith that he hath no sin, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him¹." Who will presume

¹ 1 John i. 8.

to say, that he hath kept all the commandments of God? It is what no man ever did, nor ever will do. Yet could we be free from sin, could we “do all those things that are commanded” us, even then should we have reason to say, “we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do.” Meanwhile imperfect as are the services of the best of men, notwithstanding the constant co-operation of the divine grace, they continually need the merits of the Redeemer to atone for their imperfections, and to recommend them to his heavenly Father. It is our duty indeed to labour unceasingly after a personal righteousness in obedience to the commandments of Christ: but to satisfy the law of God we require a greater, a more perfect, a complete and unexceptionable righteousness, even the righteousness of Christ himself. Is this, or is it not, the foundation on which we build?

My brethren, “In Christ Jesus all the promises of God are yea and amen*.” He

* Luke xvii. 10.

* 2 Cor. i. 20.

“ of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” By him we may attain salvation; “ neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” Neither is there any other method of salvation, than that which he hath set forth unto us: he saveth his people from their sins; and he saveth them by the means, which he hath himself appointed. Without obeying his Gospel; without loving his heavenly Father; without holding communion with his Spirit; without trusting in his righteousness; we may call him our Saviour, but we are not warranted in expecting him to be so. If we labour after this obedience, and love, and fellowship, and confidence, we may safely be persuaded that to us the words of this salvation are effectually sent; and we may have comfort in applying to ourselves those words of St. Paul to his Ephesian converts; “ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the

† 1 Cor. i. 30.

* Acts iv. 12.

48 *The Gospel the only foundation, &c.*

saints and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord*.”

May it please our heavenly Father to grant, that we may all be so “ builded together in Christ, for an habitation of God through the Spirit,” that we fail not finally of being removed to the heavenly Jerusalem ; for the sake of the same Jesus Christ our Saviour !

* Eph. ii. 19, 20, 21.

SERMON III.

ETERNAL LIFE, THE GIFT OF GOD IN HIS SON.

I JOHN v. 11, 12.

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.

“GLORY to God in the highest, and on earth peace,” was the song of the heavenly host, when they announced the nativity of the Saviour, “God manifest in the flesh.” The glory of God, as declared in an especial manner by the manifestation of his mercy to the fallen race of man; the peace and well-being of man, as effected by the manifestation of the divine mercy; were the great and important objects, which the Saviour came to attest. He came to

“ bear witness to the truth^a,” as he himself declared in his examination before the Roman governor: and a summary of the witness that he bore, is contained in the text, which compendiously describes the record that God gave of his Son. “ And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

There are four points, to which our attention may properly be directed, in the consideration of the words before us: 1st, the blessing, of which the Apostle speaks, namely “ eternal life;” 2dly, the source from which it proceeds, in that it is said to be “ given to us by God;” 3dly, the manner in which it is conveyed, “ this life is in his Son;” 4thly, the persons to whom it is given, “ he that hath the Son hath life;” and by consequence, the persons to whom it is not given, namely they, “ that have not the Son of God.” May it please almighty God to prosper our meditations;

^a John xviii. 37.

and to convert them and all our doings to his glory, and to our improvement in the knowledge and love of his only begotten Son!

I. First then; as to the blessing, of which the Apostle speaks, namely "eternal life," it is to be understood as comprising all other blessings within it. "The wages of sin," denounced in the first place upon Adam, and since perpetuated to his posterity, "is death;" a punishment, expressed in one simple term, but of a complex nature, and compounded of a variety of particulars. To die, in this signification of the word, is not to be in that state, wherein the soul is separated from the body: it is to be separated from the favour of God, and to be exposed to his severest anger and displeasure: it is to be estranged from the family of God, and to be reckoned among the children of the devil: it is to be banished "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," and from "the fulness of joy at his right hand;" and to be "punished with

everlasting destruction" in that place of torment, "where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Corresponding with this signification of the death denounced upon the sinner, is that of the life, concerning which the beloved disciple is speaking in the text. It is to be exempted from the wrath of God, and to be restored to his favour: it is from being children of wrath to be made children of grace; to be rescued from slavery under the evil spirit; and to be admitted into "the glorious liberty of the children of God:" it is to be redeemed from the torments of hell, and to be made partakers of the happiness of heaven; happiness, which shall never fail nor fade, but shall continue unimpaired throughout the ages of eternity. It were unnecessary to enter at present upon a minute detail of particulars on this division of the subject. Let it suffice to observe upon it in general terms, that it is a blessing promised by a Being of infinite perfection; and that it is, in every respect, worthy of the Giver.

II. I proceed therefore to the second point to be attended to, namely the source from which it proceeds: "God hath given to us eternal life," saith the Apostle, meaning unquestionably to affirm that eternal life is a free gift of the unconstrained grace and mercy of God. Herein consists an essential difference between the recompense denounced upon the wicked, and that which God hath prepared for them that love him. Punishment is due to the wicked: it is the necessary effect of a certain cause: it is the fruit, which he ought to reap from the seed which he sows: it is, if I may so express myself, the very pay for which he works. The servant of the devil, the sinner, receives from his master a just remuneration for the service, which he does him. "The wages of sin is death,"^b as St. Paul says, meaning evidently to point out the just relation between the thing done, and the recompense received for doing it: not such is that "eternal life," which he contrasts with the death of the sinner: "but the gift of God," he adds, "is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our

^b Rom. vi. 23.

Lord." Here is no debt, no obligation, no wages; nothing which man can claim; nothing more than what it pleases God of his infinite mercy freely to bestow: "eternal life is the gift of God:" it is the result of the uncontrolled love of God towards corrupt and sinful man, man corrupt by nature, and guilty of manifold actual sins. And the freedom of this gift, the greatness and unrestrainedness of this loving-kindness, are accordingly made the ground in scripture, on which we are to be active and indefatigable in our service of God. We are "to love him, because he first loved us." He is indeed graciously pleased (so infinite is his mercy) to promise us "eternal life," as a recompense and a reward for our diligence in serving him: and even to declare, that that recompense shall be conferred upon us in different degrees, and shall be greater or less in proportion to the diligence, with which we serve him. But whilst this most gracious promise should have the effect, as it was doubtless intended to have, of stimulating our exertions, and making us more ardent

in our love, and more active in our service, of God; we should beware of so considering it, as if it was intended to make us regard any thing in ourselves, as the meritorious cause of that recompense. Do all we can, we are "unprofitable servants." We cannot do our duty: how can we claim a recompense? We cannot do for ourselves what might exempt us from punishment: how can we deserve a reward? We cannot save ourselves from death: how can we of our own merits be intitled to eternal life?—Truly if we have regard to our own deserts, we shall find nothing but "trouble and desolation." "Destruction cometh," as the Prophet saith; "and we shall seek peace, and there shall be none^d." As to any reasonable consolation, which they can afford, we may "wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness^e." Glory to God therefore in the highest! It is through his "tender mercy" alone, that "the day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give light to them that sit in dark-

^d Ezek. vii. 25.

^e Isaiah lix. 9.

ness, and in the shadow of death; and to guide our feet into the way of peace!"

III. Thirdly, we have to look to the manner, in which this precious "gift of God" is conveyed to sinful and lost man: "this life is in his Son." God giveth to us eternal life freely, as it relates to ourselves: but still he requires the penalty of sin to be paid—the life, which he giveth, to be purchased. In one sense it is a free gift; in another it is a purchase. The purchaser is the Son of God, who made an everlasting covenant with his Father for the salvation of his redeemed; the price, which he paid, was his own blood, shed for the atonement of sin in the nature of the sinner. "The wages of sin is death;" and justice required that it should be paid. It hath been paid (blessed be God through Christ Jesus! it hath been paid) by the only begotten of the Father, who "was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and died for the salvation of mankind—a death, voluntarily undertaken, by a pure and perfect Being, who had "power to lay down his life, and power to take it again;" who neither did, nor could

do, sin ; who in his human nature was as obedient, as in his divine nature he was powerful ; as man, an example of perfect righteousness ; as God, the Lord of life ! Here was merit to purchase for the sons of Adam that, which of themselves they could not have hoped to attain ; here was merit, to redeem the transgressions, that were under the first covenant, the covenant of works ; here was merit, to purchase the promise of eternal inheritance under the second covenant, the covenant of grace, O the unsearchable wisdom and goodness of God, in contriving to propitiate his offended justice ; to punish sin, and yet to forgive and spare the sinner ; to bestow everlasting happiness as the gift of his free grace, and yet to receive for it a price, equal in value with the blessing which it was intended to purchase ! equal, did I say ? nay, great as that blessing is, and incapable of being duly appreciated, the price, that is paid for the purchase, infinitely surpasses it. We can hardly contemplate with a steady mind the brightness of that “ glory, which shall be revealed ” in the faithful servants of Christ ; of that “ gift of eternal

life," which is given to his redeemed. But human reason sinks under the contemplation of the price, that has been paid for it—the precious blood of the incarnate Son of God—of “ God, manifest in the flesh,” and suffering death in the likeness of man.

IV. And who, let it in the fourth place be considered, who are the persons, to whom this blessing of eternal life is given ; for whom is reserved the inheritance purchased by the Son of God? They are those, who heartily and unreservedly embrace the glad tidings of salvation, which he hath announced ; who receive him, as their Saviour ; and obey him, as their Lord. “ He that hath the Son, hath life ;” saith St. John in the text ; “ and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life ;” plainly intending to assert, not only that there is salvation in Christ Jesus for them who throw themselves upon his abundant merits to be saved ; but also that there is “ not salvation in any other ; for that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved :” and that blessed Saviour himself claims, and claims

exclusively, the prerogative of conferring both redemption from punishment, and the happiness of heaven; where he asserts, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him^f.”

Would we then enjoy everlasting life, we must seek it where it is to be found: we must seek it through the blood of Christ, in a lively and active faith in his name. We must believe in Christ, as “the author and finisher of our faith”—as perfect God, and perfect man—as suffering for our salvation, and making atonement and satisfaction for our sins. We must renounce all pretensions to the divine favour upon account of any righteousness of our own, and must plead in our justification the righteousness of Christ: we must disclaim all fancied merits of our own, and throw ourselves upon the merits of Christ.—Further: as we look to him for salvation, we must also be obedient to his laws; as we trust in him

^f John iii. 36.

for our Saviour, we must also submit to him as our Lord; as we believe in him, we must keep his commandments.—Moreover; we must habitually live in communion with him—in external and internal communion. We must observe those outward means of grace, which he hath provided for our growth in holiness; we must be careful in the reading and hearing of his word; we must be diligent in frequenting his house of prayer; we must be attentive to his ministers; we must sanctify his day of rest; we must be partakers of his sacraments. And these things we must observe, not only because they are ordained by Christ; but specially for the sake of that spiritual grace, which they are ordained for the purpose of conveying. Regenerated in the waters of baptism by that Holy Spirit, who supplies the place of Christ in the hearts of his followers, we are continually to seek his sanctifying graces in the communion of Christ's body and blood, and in all other appointed means. By Him we must hold spiritual intercourse with Christ. By Him we must be "renewed day by day." By Him we

must be "strengthened with might in the inner man." By Him our "hearts must be opened," and "the eyes of our understanding must be enlightened." By Him we must be comforted with divine consolation. By Him we must be "renewed in the spirit of our minds:" we must "put off the old man," our natural corruption; and must "put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness after the image of Him that made us."

These are among the principal ways, (I speak summarily as the present time will allow,) wherein we may be said to "have the Son of God:" namely, by believing in him; by obeying him; by practising the outward means of grace, which he hath ordained; by holding internal communion with him by his Spirit. He who thus "hath the Son," hath a foretaste and a promise of eternal life; but he that in these ways "hath not the Son of God, hath not life."

Shall we be told that life, eternal life, may be procured by other ways than

these; that these are not necessary to its attainment? "To the law then, and to the testimony;" to "the record, which God hath given us by his Son." By them let us be instructed, which of the ways, that have been specified, is not necessary to salvation.

1. Is it not necessary, that we believe in Christ? I speak not of those to whom Christ hath never been preached; nor of those, (if any such there be,) who are unavoidably prevented from believing. But of us, of all men to whom he is preached, and who lie under no insuperable obstacle, is it not necessary that he be believed? If not, wherefore is he preached at all? Wherefore did God send his Son into the world, as an object of faith to all mankind, and with such a stupendous apparatus of prophecies and miracles to bear witness to his mission; if men might receive or reject him, might believe or disown him as they pleased? Surely when almighty God condescends to speak to man, it is man's duty and interest to hear and attend; not to "hide himself from the voice of the Lord

God," as did his sinful progenitor among the trees of the garden of Eden; but to listen with a willing ear, and an humble and obedient heart. It is a prevailing error of the present time to raise morality to a high degree of eminence; God forbid I should pretend to speak lightly of morality; of Christian morality, the fruit of Christian faith! But of morality, as distinguished from, and independent of, faith in Christ, the Gospel knows nothing as a condition or qualification for eternal life. The error prevalent as it at present is, is not however of modern birth: it hath at all times had its advocates; especially at the period of the Reformation, when our evangelical Reformers condemned it with marked severity. "They are to be had accursed" (affirms our 18th Article) "that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For holy scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved." If we reject that name, whither shall we turn? on what foundation shall

we rest our hopes? what powerful plea have we prepared to present at the judgment seat of God? what offering to conciliate his affection? what atonement, to propitiate his anger? Shall we present ourselves boldly at his throne with a pretence, that we have perfectly conformed to his will, whether revealed by his holy word, or more dimly disclosed by the light of natural reason? Alas for that miserable weakness and corruption of our nature, which renders us incapable of duly serving a holy God? Shall we plead in our justification, that although by nature incapable of perfection, we have served him to the full extent of our power? Who then will dare to say, that he hath not been a wilful sinner; that he hath not submitted to temptation, when he might have resisted it; that he hath not done evil, when he might have avoided it?—Shall we rest our claim to pardon for former sin, on subsequent repentance and amendment? a repentance and an amendment, themselves abounding in manifold imperfections; themselves requiring a like indulgence as the sins, for which they are offered as an atonement! Look

whithersoever you will for justification; try the subject in all its parts, survey it in all its bearings; no hope remains for him, who obstinately refuses the hope of the Gospel: wherever the Gospel is preached, "he that believeth not, shall be damned."

2. Again: shall we be told, that it is enough for us to believe in Christ, and that it is not necessary to obey him?—Where then is that licence for sin, which some men would fain discover in the true evangelical doctrine of salvation by the grace of God through faith in the blood of the Redeemer? Where is that "cloke of maliciousness," which they would fain discover in the Gospel doctrine of "liberty to the servants of God?" Where is that dispensation, which they would fain perceive in the gracious promises of Christ, from the strictest morality, the most diligent perseverance in "good works?" "We are saved not by works, but by grace:" what then? shall we neglect good works? "shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!" Morality, distinguished from, and independent of, Christian faith, is no-

thing: but Christian morality is of the very essence, it is the true fruit, the sure testimony, the faithful companion, the glory and perfection, yea the very life and soul, of true Christian faith. Let us beware, that we do not confound things so different as worldly and Christian morality; as the works of the natural man, and those of the disciple of Christ! Let us beware how we suppose, that because a man cannot be saved by morality of one sort, therefore he can be saved without morality of the other sort; that because one who rejects the Gospel, will not be saved for being a moral man, therefore there is a hope of salvation for an immoral professor of the Gospel! Christian morality assumes to itself no merit: it sets up no arrogant claim to God's favour: it pretends not to "open the gates of heaven;" it is only the handmaid in conducting the Christian believer in his road towards them. Without it no man shall enter in: but they who disesteem and reject it, are well apprised by God's word of the evil which they shall incur; when Christ shall command "the workers of iniquity," "the

slothful and the unprofitable servant to depart from him^s ;” and when “ vengeance shall be taken in flaming fire on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ^h.”

3. Further ; are there those who would persuade us, that we may be partakers of the grace of God without practising the appointed means of grace ? Why, then, were they appointed, and that with a promise of especial blessings annexed to some of them, if we are at our own will to neglect or despise the means ; and still may be persuaded that we are in possession of the grace, which they were appointed to convey ? Thus in particular, with regard to the sacraments ; why did Christ appoint baptism to be the “ laver of regenerationⁱ,” the road to “ salvation^k,” and “ the entrance into the kingdom of heaven^l,” if we can be regenerated, and saved, and admitted into heaven without it ? and why did he appoint the holy communion of his body and blood, as the way

^s Matt. vii. 23. xxv. 26, 30, 41.

^h 2 Thess. i. 8.

ⁱ Tit. iii. 5.

^k Mark xvi. 16.

^l John iii. 5.

whereby we are to “ dwell in him, and he in us ”—whereby we are to “ have life in us, and to be raised up at the last day ”;” if we can hold communion with him, and derive life from him, and be raised up by him without it? It is a rule in the economy of Providence, that he always worketh by means. In the works of creation we see it every where about us: in the work of redemption we read the same truth unequivocally revealed to us by his written word. He covenanteth to bestow the blessings, which Christ hath purchased, on those who practise the appointed means: “ He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ; ”—“ he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ; ”—“ faith cometh by hearing ; ”—“ whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. ” Thus do the sacraments, the ministry of the word, and prayer, appear to be covenanted means, whereby God dispenses his benefits to man. We presume not to limit his mercies: God forbid! Yet thus much may be said with safety, (nor is there any

^m John vi. 53—56.

thing uncharitable in saying it,) not only that they, who despise or neglect the means, do thereby seem to betray a want of earnestness for the gift that is to be conferred, and a want of reverence for the almighty and all-wise Giver; but also, that the Giver himself appears to have limited the blessings to those, who will conscientiously practise the means.

4. But then, lastly, there is danger, lest we be contented with the means; instead of practising them with diligence for the sake of those spiritual blessings, that spiritual communion, which they were appointed, and are continually designed, to convey, through the operation of the Spirit of grace. Will it be said, that this spiritual intercourse with Christ, that this internal operation of the Spirit, is not necessary to salvation? Wherefore then did Christ promise to “send his Holy Spirit^a,” to hold fellowship with his faithful followers, to “abide with^b” and “dwell in them as his temples^c,” and to “bear witness with their spirits, that they are the children of

^a John xv. 26. ^b John xiv. 16. ^c 1 Cor. iii. 16.

God¹?" Surely it was not to no purpose that he told his disciples, and in them all future Christians, that he would "be with them always unto the end of the world:" and that he promised "the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, to abide in them for ever!" As long as the world shall last, and "the prince of the power of the air," the spirit of falsehood, "shall work in the children of disobedience," so long shall the Spirit of truth and holiness dwell in "the children of light." I speak not of those visionary raptures, which are sometimes described by enthusiasts as the in-dwelling of the Spirit. But I speak of that "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," which he himself describes by the mouth of his inspired messengers, as "the kingdom of God that is within us;"—of that "goodness, and holiness, and truth;"—of that "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, which are the fruit of the Spirit," and the end of which is everlasting life. I speak of that "peace of God, which

¹ Rom. viii. 16. ² Matt. xxviii. 20. ³ Rom. xiv. 17.

⁴ Eph. v. 9. ⁵ Gal. v. 23.

passeth all understanding, and which keepeth the heart and mind through Christ Jesus^x." I speak of that "joy and peace in believing, wherewith the God of hope filleth the humble Christian, that he may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost^y." It was "through the Eternal Spirit that Christ offered himself without spot to God^z;" and it is through the same Spirit, "dwelling in us as his temples," that "the blood of Christ must purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God;" must endue us with holiness here, and so lead us to glory hereafter.

May it be our constant endeavour with the aid of this Holy Spirit so to cleave unto Christ, by faith, and by obedience; in outward ordinances, and by inward holiness; that having the Son of God for our Saviour and our Lord, our Prophet and our High Priest, we may finally attain to that eternal life, which God hath given to the disciples of his Son! Grant this we beseech thee, O merciful Father, for the sake of

^x Phil. iv. 7.

^y Rom. xv. 13.

^z Heb. ix. 14.

72 *Eternal life, the gift of God, &c.*

Jesus Christ, our Lord! to whom with thee, O Father, and thee, O Eternal Spirit, three Persons in one Godhead, be honour and glory for ever! Amen.

SERMON IV.

ON THE DIVINITY OF THE WORD.

JOHN i. 1.

In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God.

IN the portions of scripture selected for the morning's service of that day, on which we commemorate the Nativity of our Lord, it appears to be the intention of the Church to fill us with the most magnificent notions of the dignity of that divine Person, whose appearance in the flesh we then more immediately celebrate. The royal Psalmist leads the way, addressing him in a prophetic hymn of incomparable sublimity, as God; seated on a throne of everlasting

duration, and bearing a sceptre of unerring righteousness^a. The evangelical Prophet follows, describing him as invested with an everlasting dominion, established “in justice and in judgment;” and as intitled to the lofty appellations of “Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace^b.” To him succeeds “the beloved Physician whose praise is in the Gospel,” announcing the incarnation of the same divine Person, and representing him in the language of an angel, as “a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord^c.” By the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who next comes in the order of selection, he is represented as “the Son of God;”—“the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person;”—as the object of adoration to “all the angels of God;”—as “God,” the everlasting King;—as the “Lord,” the unchangeable Creator of the universe^d. Lastly, the beloved Disciple stands forward to bear testimony to the majesty of his Lord; and speaking of him under the appellation of “the Word,” be-

^a Psalm xlv. 7. ^b Isaiah ix. 6, 7. ^c Luke ii. 11.
^d Heb. i. 2, 3, 6, 8, 10.

cause by Him the divine will has been revealed to man, pronounces him the only begotten of the Father, with whose glory he was invested : the maker of all things ; the life and the light of men : begotten of the Father from everlasting, before all worlds ; of one substance with the Father ; very and eternal God ;—for such appears to be the intention of the Apostle in the passage, with which he opens his Gospel, and which I have chosen for my text ; “ In the beginning was the Word ; and the Word was with God ; and the Word was God.”

Stronger and more elevated language cannot be conceived, than that which is employed in these several extracts, to fill us with becoming notions of the dignity of our blessed Redeemer. And perhaps it might be sufficient to rest our belief in his divine nature on such general statements as these. But as there are some among the professors of Christianity, who are for reducing our notions of the Saviour's dignity to a less exalted standard, and for having him regarded as an inferior and a created being, a being of the same nature as ourselves,

but elevated to a higher degree of honour; it becomes necessary that we should examine the grounds of our faith more minutely and in detail; and show, in opposition to the error of the Socinian, that the universal church of Christ in general, and we of the pure branch of it established in this kingdom in particular, are amply warranted in believing Jesus of Nazareth, who took upon him the nature of man, to be essentially partaker of the divine nature also; and to have been, and to be, very and eternal God.

For the establishment of this truth, (a truth, let it be observed in passing, not of a mere speculative nature, but one most intimately interwoven with our practice, inasmuch as upon it depends the worship, which we offer to our blessed Lord;) I propose to lay before you various passages from the inspired writings: wherein 1st, he is denominated by the name and titles of God; 2dly he is described as performing divine acts; 3dly, he is invested with the divine attributes; and fourthly, is represented as the object of divine worship.

The conclusion from the whole will be, that a being, to whom these marks characteristic of divinity are assigned by the word of truth, must be himself really and essentially divine.

First, then; I observe that Jesus Christ is perpetually denominated in the holy scriptures by the name and titles of God.

And here the difficulty is, not to adduce passages by which this proposition is confirmed, but to select a few from the variety of passages which offer themselves.

By David, as we have already seen, and the application of the passage is made by St. Paul, he is called “ God, whose throne is for ever and ever:” by Isaiah, “ the mighty God, the everlasting Father^f ;” by Jeremiah, “ the Lord our Righteousness^g ;” by the Psalmist, “ the most high God^h ;” by Isaiah again, “ the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the First and the Last, beside whom

^e Psalm xlv. 7. Heb. i. 8. ^f Isaiah ix. 6. ^g Jer. xxiii. 6. ^h Psalm lxxviii. 56. Compare with this, 1 Cor. x. 9.

there is no Godⁱ;" by Malachi, "the Lord, the Sun of righteousness^k;" by Peter, "our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ^l;" by John, "God" and "the true God^m;" by Paul, "the great God and our Saviourⁿ," or rather "our great God and Saviour," "God blessed for ever^o;" by Thomas, "My Lord and my God^p;" by Paul again, "the Lord of Glory^q;" by Jude, "the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ^r;" and by John, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords^s." It were unnecessary to multiply examples: for if the divinity of Christ be capable of being proved, by showing that he is described in the sacred writings by names peculiar to the divine nature, the foregoing passages must be sufficient for the purpose: at least it may be affirmed, that he, who can resist the evidence of these, may resist whatever evidence of this kind the whole bible can supply.

ⁱ Isaiah xlv. 6. Compare with Rev. xxii. 13. ^k Mal. iii. 1. ^l 2 Pet. iii. 18. ^m John i. 1. 1 John v. 20.
ⁿ Tit. ii. 13. ^o Rom. ix. 5. ^p John xx. 28.
^q 1 Cor. ii. 8. ^r Jude 4. ^s Rev. xvii. 14. xix. 16.

I proceed then, to show, 2dly, that as he is denominated by the name and titles of God, so is he described as performing divine acts:

The creating of the world is a divine act: but “all things were made by Christ: and without him was not any thing made that was made.” The preserving of the world is a divine act: but not only were all things created by Christ, but “by him all things consist.” To reveal to men the divine will, is a divine act: but, saith St. Paul of the Gospel, “neither received I it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” To speak to men by the mouth of an inspired messenger, is a divine act: but it was Christ that spake in St. Paul. To give authority to the ministers of the Gospel is a divine act: but it was Jesus Christ, who “put” the Apostles “into the ministry.” To fill men with spiritual gifts is a divine act: but it is Christ, who sent the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and continues to

† John i. 3.

‡ Col. i. 17.

* Gal. i. 12.

‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 3.

* 1 Tim. i. 12.

send him to all believers^a. To pardon sins is a divine act: but Christ claimed the prerogative of forgiving sins^b. To quicken the dead is a divine act: but “as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will^c.” To raise the body of the man Jesus from the grave was a divine act: but the act was the act of Christ; “destroy this temple,” said he to the Jews, “and in three days I will raise it up^d.” To raise the bodies of the dead at the day of judgment will be a divine act: but “I,” said Christ, “will raise them up at the last day^e.”

As we have thus seen our blessed Saviour denominated by the divine name and titles, and described as performing divine acts, let us now proceed to survey him; 3dly, as invested with the divine attributes.

Eternity is an attribute of God: but “I,” said Jesus, “am Alpha and Omega,

^a John xv. 26. xvi. 7. ^b Matt. xi. 2, 5. ^c John v. 21. ^d John ii. 19. ^e John vi. 54.

the beginning and the end, the first and the last; which is, and which was, and which is to come^f." Omnipotence is an attribute of God: but "I," said the same Jesus, "am the Almighty^g." Omnipresence is an attribute of God: but it is Christ that "filleth all in all^h." Omniscience is an attribute of God: but Christ "knoweth all things^h," and "searcheth the reins and heartsⁱ" of men. Truth and holiness are attributes of God: but Christ is described by one Apostle under the appellation of "the Holy One^k," and by another under that of "the faithful witness^l," and by himself as "he that is holy, he that is true^m." To be the fountain of life is an attribute of God: but "Christ," saith St. Paul, "is our lifeⁿ."

It remains, that having seen the names, the operations, and the attributes of God thus given to our blessed Saviour, we consider him 4thly, as the object of divine

^f Rev. i. 8. ^g Eph. i. 28. ^h John xvi. 30. xxi. 17.
ⁱ Rev. ii. 23. ^k Acts iii. 14. ^l Rev. i. 5.
^m Rev. iii. 7. ⁿ Col. iii. 4.

worship. And upon this point I shall just remark, as I pass on, that if Christ be acknowledged in the bible, as the proper object of adoration, that acknowledgment amounts to an assertion of his divinity. It was the declaration of Christ himself, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve:" so that to admit religious worship to be offered to himself, must be in effect to avow himself the Lord God of the worshipper.

It is true, that it was the practice in the East, for persons to prostrate themselves before their superiors as a mark of respect; and that this prostration is sometimes denominated worshipping. And it is also true, that no more than this may sometimes have been intended, when it is said that certain persons fell down at Christ's feet, and worshipped him. It is however no less true, that in some cases this testimony of veneration appears to have been intended for divine worship;

° Matth. iv. 10.

and that in others the worship, of which the scriptures speak as addressed to Christ, could have no other intention.

When for example under the former case, the wise men presented unto Jesus "frankincense," which in their native country was the usual offering of religious homage, their prostration, which accompanied it, may be most naturally interpreted into a mark of divine adoration. When the leper "fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" his acknowledgment of the power of Jesus may reasonably lead us to suppose, that he prostrated himself before him in token of divine worship. When the Canaanitish woman on a similar occasion showed him a similar mark of respect, it is reasonable to entertain the same conclusion.

But however this may be, the design of the worship offered to him on some other occasions cannot admit of a question. For, why (let it be demanded) did the disciples worship Christ, when he had

finally left the earth, and was ascended into heaven^p? Why did the apostles salute their converts, wishing them “grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,” whom they thus invoked, conjointly with the Father, to send a blessing on their ministry? Why did St. Paul “beseech the Lord” Christ, to remove from him a severe affliction, thus making Christ the object of his prayers^q? Why are the Christians of the apostolical age described as “calling upon the name of the Lord” Jesus, and in what way did they call on him, if not with religious adoration? Why do “all the angels of God worship him^r?” Why are all the hosts of heaven represented in St. John’s visions as falling prostrate before him, and worshipping him, as they worship the Father^t? Why is it said, that “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth^u?” Why is Christ proposed as the

^p Luke xxiv. 52. ^q 2 Cor. xii. 8. ^r Acts ix. 14.
^s xxii. 16. ^t Heb. i. 6. ^u Rev. v. 13. ^v Phil. ii.
 10.

object of our faith, hope, and love; as the Person, whom we are to obey, to pray to, and to praise? Why do all these things occur in a religion, the purpose of which is to call men from improper objects of adoration to “serve the living God^x,” if he be not the very and eternal God, whom implicitly and expressly, by example and by precept, we are thus instructed to serve?

There is however one remarkable case, which comes under this head of our subject, and which appears to require more particular attention. I allude to the concluding scene of the life of St. Stephen, and will notice the application of it to the present inquiry in the words of a learned Bishop of our Church. “Our blessed Saviour,” he observes, “when expiring upon the cross, cried out, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and he had just before prayed for his murderers in these words, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. In like manner the first martyr, St. Stephen, at

^x Acts xiv. 15.

“ the moment of his being stoned to death,
 “ prayed to Christ, Lord Jesus, receive my
 “ spirit ; and for his murderers he added,
 “ Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.
 “ These prayers of Christ addressed to his
 “ Father, and of St. Stephen addressed to
 “ Christ, are in substance the same, and
 “ are recorded by the same evangelist, St.
 “ Luke. Now it seems very evident, that
 “ if Christ was not the true God, and
 “ equal to the Father, then this proto-
 “ martyr died in two acts that seem not
 “ only idolatrous, but also blasphemous,
 “ since he worshipped Christ in the same
 “ acts, in which Christ had worshipped his
 “ Father. But to remove all doubts con-
 “ cerning the lawfulness of St. Stephen’s
 “ worship of Christ, and to give decisive
 “ authority to his example, St. Luke tells
 “ us, that Stephen was full of the Holy
 “ Ghost.”

The result of the foregoing remarks on
 the names, the operations, the attributes,
 and the worship, given in the holy scrip-

tures to our Saviour, is an irrefragable argument in behalf of his divinity. For, that I may adopt the inference of the learned Bp. Burnet, “ where all these things are
“ laid together in that variety of expressions, in which they lie scattered in the
“ New Testament, it is not possible to retain any reverence for those books, if
“ we imagine, that they are written in a
“ style so full of approaches to the deifying of a mere man, that without a very
“ critical studying of languages and phrases,
“ it is not possible to understand them
“ otherwise. Idolatry and a plurality of
“ gods seem to be the main things, that
“ the scriptures warn us against; and yet
“ here is a pursued thread of passages and
“ discourses, that do naturally lead a man
“ to think that Christ is the true God,
“ who yet according to the opponents of
“ the doctrine only acted in his name,
“ and has now a high honour put on him
“ by God.”

The fact appears to be, and I wish to recommend it to your attention as sup-

• Bp. Burnet on the 2d Article.

plying a salutary caution with respect to the opponents of Christ's divinity, that the Socinian is contented to take the scripture by halves ; and thus while he fixes his mind on those parts, which speak of the human nature of our Saviour, overlooks those, which speak with equal clearness of his divine nature. The consequence is that he denies Christ to be God, and considers him as a mere man, a being of the same kind with ourselves. We, on the other hand, taking the whole of scripture for the rule of our faith, and comparing its several parts with each other, "believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man ;" that as he is "man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world," so also he is "God; of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds ;" that in a word he is "perfect God," as well as "perfect man." Such we humbly conceive to be the "faith, once delivered unto the saints:" nor should it ever be forgotten to be the purport of the general language, as well as of particular texts, of scripture, that as "the Word was made flesh and dwelt

amongst us," so also " in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **THE WORD WAS GOD.**"

Now unto Him, " God manifest in the flesh;" unto Him who is " over all, God blessed for evermore;" unto Him, in the unity of the Father and the Eternal Spirit, be " blessing and honour and glory and power," henceforth and for ever! Amen.



SERMON V.

THE SON OF MAN THE SAVIOUR OF THAT WHICH
WAS LOST.

LUKE xix. 10.

*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save
that which was lost.*

IN this declaration, the declaration of our blessed Saviour himself, our attention is drawn to the most important event recorded in the history of the world; for surely in such a light must be considered the incarnation of "God manifest in the flesh;" and the consequent redemption of the lost race of mankind from sin and misery, and their restoration to the favour of the Almighty. Desirable as it is, that we should be employed at various times in

examining all the various parts of the system of the Christian faith, we should especially have regard to our leading principles, the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity, comprised in this declaration of Christ. It is for this reason, that we insist continually upon the utter incompetency of mankind to purchase salvation by their own merits or deservings; and preach unto you salvation through the alone merits of Jesus Christ. It is for the same reason that I have chosen the text just recited for the subject of the present discourse: for I trust, that with the good blessing of God upon our prayers for his preventing and assisting grace, our sense of devotion may be strengthened and increased, and our stedfastness to the principles of the Gospel may be confirmed, if we employ this and some following discourses in examining the purpose for which Christ suffered; the motive, which induced him to it: the sufferings, which he underwent; the manner, in which he supported them; and the conduct which is required of us in return. Such an investigation, I persuade myself, may be made "profitable for doctrine, for

reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" and whilst it may strengthen us on the one hand in a firm and operative faith in the characteristic articles of our religion; it may contribute on the other hand to make "the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The first branch of the subject thus proposed, is the purpose for which Christ suffered; a purpose, which is briefly, but expressively and fully conveyed in his own declaration in the text, that he came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

In discoursing to you upon these words, there are four points, on each of which I propose successively to enlarge: 1st, I shall state the nature and the particulars of that "loss," which Christ in his state of humiliation as "the Son of man," came to repair: 2dly, I shall show what is that "salvation," which was to be effected by his coming: 3dly, I shall make it appear that the remedy, which he applied, was intended to be commensurate with the disease; or, in other words, that he came to

save, not a favoured part alone, but the whole of "that which was lost:" and 4thly, I shall infer that, with respect to those who shall be ultimately lost, notwithstanding the coming of the Son of man, their perdition will have been occasioned, not by the inefficacy of the remedy which he has furnished, but by their wilful attachment to their disease.

I. First then, as to the nature and particulars of that loss, to repair which Christ suffered.

Placed by his merciful Creator in the garden of Eden, in a state of happiness, purity, and immortality, the progenitor of the human race was apprized, that his continuance in that state depended on his observance of one test of his obedience. "If thou eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt surely die." He did eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and the sentence of death was ratified not upon him alone, but upon every individual of his natural descendants: "by one man, sin entered into the world,

and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men ;” and “ by his disobedience all were made sinners ;” and “ judgment came upon all men to condemnation ^a.” Such is the view which St. Paul gives us of the consequences of the fall of Adam, operating to the essential corruption of human nature.

And this in a general view was the nature of that “ loss,” wherein all the sons of Adam were involved, and from which Christ, the only Son of the most high God, taking upon him the nature, and appearing under the appellation, of “ the Son of man,” came to save them. If however we survey the particulars of that loss more in detail, we shall be better able to appreciate the salvation, wrought for mankind by Jesus Christ.

Involved in the consequences of the fall of their progenitor, the sons of Adam were “ lost” to holiness, and were all under sin. Hear the application to this effect, which

^a Rom. v. 12, 18, 19.

St. Paul makes of the humble confession of the Psalmist : “ There is none righteous, no, not one : There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way ; they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips ; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness ; their feet are swift to shed blood ; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known : there is no fear of God before their eyes^b.”

They were “ lost ” to the knowledge and worship of the only true God, and devoted to all the enormities of idolatry : “ they are without excuse,” said the same indignant Apostle, speaking of the universal condition of the heathen world ; “ because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful ; but became vain in their imaginations, and

^b Rom. iii. 10—18.

their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; and changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.^c”

They were “lost” to the knowledge and the practice of the charities of life, and of the domestic, the social, and the moral virtues; and plunged into the abyss of immorality and profligacy. “Wherefore,” says the same Apostle again, connecting this view of the heathen world with the foregoing; and intimating the indissoluble connection, which subsists between pure religion and sound morality, “Wherefore, even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient, and to work all un-

^c Rom. i. 20—25.

cleanness with greediness: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful^d.”

Thus were they “lost” to the favour of God, who is “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” and who “hateth all them that work wickedness;” and being “the children of disobedience,” they were by natural and necessary consequence, “the children of wrath^e.”

They were “lost” to the sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit, who, “because they did not like to retain him in their knowledge, gave them over to vile affections and to a reprobate mind,” and suffered them to “walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the

^d Rom. i. 28—31.

^e Eph. ii. 2, 3.

power of the air, the spirit that now" (and ever) "worketh in the children of disobedience^f."

Forlorn as they appeared to be in their actual state, they were "lost" to all reasonable and well-founded expectation of a better. "Strangers from the covenants of promise, without Christ, and without God in the world," they were at the same time without "hope^g:"—without hope, that atonement could be made for their iniquities;—without hope, that their sins could be pardoned;—without hope, that they could be justified, in the sight of a holy and righteous God, be admitted into his favour, and made heirs of his salvation.

II. And thus from considering the nature and the particulars of that "loss," which was entailed by the fall of Adam on his posterity; we are the better enabled to estimate the character of that "salvation," which was wrought for them by Christ,

^f Rom. i. 26, 28. Eph. ii. 2.

^g Eph. ii. 12.

the second Adam ;—that quickening Spirit, which giveth life to all them, who are naturally “ dead in trespasses and sins.”

In a general view of the subject, the Apostle briefly states the nature of that salvation, when he contrasts the defeat of Adam with the victory of Christ. “ As by the offence of one,” he pronounces, “ judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous^h.”

Let us however again take the subject in detail ; and compare the particulars of the “ salvation” wrought by Christ, with the particulars of the “ loss,” already specified, as resulting from the fall of Adam. The Son of man then is come to save us that were lost, by being “ made sin for us,” and suffering in his own person and

^h Rom. v. 18, 19.

in our nature the wages of sin, “that we may be made the righteousness of God in him¹.” He saveth us that were lost, by withdrawing us from the idolatrous service of false gods; and by revealing to us the spiritual nature, and the infinite perfections, of that high and holy Being, to whom alone our worship is due; and by instructing us in the “spiritual” and “true” devotion, with which alone he is to be worshipped^k. He saveth us that were lost, by giving us a clear insight into those moral “defilements,” which pollute “the heart of man¹;” and by teaching us, that in our intercourse with mankind we must endeavour to be “perfect, even as our Father, which is in heaven, is perfect^m;” and that in our personal conduct and affections we must strive to “purify ourselves, even as he is pureⁿ.” He saveth us that were lost, by reconciling us unto God, by imputing to us not our own trespasses but his righteousness; and by converting us from “children of wrath” into “children of grace^o.” He saveth us that were lost, by

¹ 2 Cor. v. 21.

^k John iv. 24.

^l Matt. xv. 18.

^m Matt. v. 48.

ⁿ 1 John iii. 8.

^o Eph. ii. 4, 5, 16.

sending his Holy Spirit, to regenerate, enlighten, renew, comfort, confirm, and strengthen us; to purify in us that which is impure; to sanctify that which is unholy; to purge us from the pollution of our own corrupt hearts; and to enable us to wrestle against the power of our spiritual adversary. He saveth us that were lost, by filling us with a holy hope, and "joy, and peace in believing^p," that he hath triumphed over death and the grave, and hath opened unto his faithful followers the gates of heaven; that he hath made atonement for our sins; that we are justified by faith in his blood; that we are reconciled to our heavenly Father; that we are become the children of God; and if children, "then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Such is the nature of that salvation, wrought by the Son of man, who (as the Apostle compendiously describes the purpose of his incarnation) "was of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption^q:"—

^p Rom. xv. 13.

^q 1 Cor. i. 30.

wisdom, to enlighten us with the truth;—
righteousness, to justify us before God;—
sanctification, to cleanse us from all sin;
—and redemption, to pay the price of our
ransom.

III. Perfect as the salvation wrought
by Christ was in this respect, I am in the
third place to make it appear, that it was
no less perfect in another; that the remedy
which he applied was commensurate with
the disease; in other words that he came
to save, not a part alone, but the whole of
that which was lost; or as our Church as-
serts in her 31st Article, that “the offering
“ of Christ once made is that perfect re-
“ demption, propitiation, and satisfaction
“ for all the sins of the whole world.”

And here, in the first place, it may be
observed, that in scripture the perform-
ances of Christ are compared in extent
with those of Adam, who was (as the
Apostle says) the figure or type of Him
that was to come. As Adam, being the
representative of mankind, did by his

transgression involve all men in guilt, and subject them to punishment; provoked God's wrath, and drew the effects of it upon all men; brought all men under the slavery of sin, and the necessity of punishment; so was our Lord the proxy of mankind, and by his performances in our behalf undid for our advantage what the former had done to our prejudice: by his perfect obedience, expiating the common guilt, suspending the fatal sentence, pacifying God's wrath, imputing righteousness, and restoring life to all that would embrace it. Thus St. Paul prosecutes the comparison at large in his fifth chapter to the Romans, finishing with this inference; "Therefore as by the offence of one man judgment came upon all men to condemnation; so by the righteousness of one, the free-gift came upon all men to justification of life." And he elsewhere expressly affirms, that death is abolished, and immortality conferred on all men, to the full extent of Adam's delinquency; for he affirms, that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Again, the object of our Saviour's sufferings is often described by qualities and circumstances which belong to all men. *All* the sons of Adam are in a *lost* condition; but the Son of man came to save *that* which was *lost*. "*All* men have *sinned*," saith St. Paul; but it is a faithful saying, saith the same Apostle, and worthy of all acceptation, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." *All* men are naturally weak and wicked; in a state of alienation and enmity toward God: but, even "when we were *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*;" "when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." *All* men have souls and lives exposed to misery and ruin: and "the Son of man came, not to destroy, but to save the souls, or lives of men." Propositions such as these, respecting an indefinite object, are in the common use of language equivalent to those, wherein the object is expressed universally.

^r Rom. iii. 23.

^s 1 Tim. i. 15.

^t Rom. v. 9, 10.

^u Luke ix. 56.

The object however is expressed universally; and that in more than one form. Jesus is called the Saviour of *the world*: who was sent and came into the world to save *the world*; whose chief performances were designed and directed to the salvation of *the world*. “We know,” said the Samaritans, “that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of *the world*.” “Behold,” said the Baptist, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of *the world*.” “We have seen and do testify,” saith St. John, “that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of *the world*.” “God was in Christ,” saith St. Paul, “reconciling *the world* unto himself.” “Jesus Christ,” saith St. John again, “is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of *the whole world*.”—the *whole* world as contradistinguished from all Christians to whom this catholic Epistle of St. John is addressed;—that whole world, of which he says in the same Epistle, “the whole world lieth in wickedness.” And it is the gracious de-

^x John iv. 42.

^y John i. 29.

^z 1 John iv. 14.

^a 2 Cor. v. 19.

^b 1 John ii, 2.

^c 1 John v. 19.

claration of Christ himself, that “ God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved ^d.” Surely every unprejudiced person must perceive that the world, in all these passages, is to be taken in its obvious and ordinary sense, not as restricted to a certain company of some persons particularly qualified, and separated from others ; but as extended to the whole community of mankind, and comprehending all persons, however distinguished from each other.

Again ; the universality of the extent of Christ’s salvation is further expressed under another kind of form, equally large and comprehensive. “ The living God, who is the Saviour of *all men*, specially of those that believe ^e :” — of all men universally ; not only of the faithful, though chiefly of them. “ God our Saviour would have *all men* to be saved ^f ;” — “ The man Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for *all* ^g ;” — “ God hath concluded *all* in unbelief, that he

^d John iii. 17. • 1 Tim. iv. 10. † 1 Tim. ii. 3.
^e 1 Tim. ii. 6.

might have mercy upon *all*^h;"—" Christ died for *all*¹;"—" He tasted death for *every man*^k;"—" The grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto *all men*^l;"—" He was the true Light, which lighteth *every man* that cometh into the world^m."

But still farther, in order (as it should seem) to exclude any limitation or diminution of these general terms, at least as far as concerns the members of the visible church of Christ, it is expressly affirmed that our Saviour's purpose had respect even to those, who might nevertheless lose the benefit of them; and might ultimately not be saved. For he is described as having "died for some, who might nevertheless perish and be destroyedⁿ;" as having "bought them, who nevertheless denied him, and brought on themselves destruction by bringing in damnable heresies^o;" and as having "sanctified them, who tread him under foot, and count the blood of the

^h Rom. xi. 32.¹ 2 Cor. v. 14.^k Heb. ii. 9.^l Tit. ii. 11.ⁿ John i. 9.^o 1 Cor. viii. 11.[•] 2 Pet. ii. 1.

covenant an unholy thing[†]." And surely every restriction upon the intended effects of his sacrifice must be removed, if it be once admitted that he came to save even those who willingly corrupted and apostatized from his truth, who denied, trampled upon, and profaned him.

IV. And this leads me, by an easy transition, to the inference which I proposed to draw in the 4th place, with respect to those, who shall ultimately perish; namely, that their perdition will have been occasioned, not by the inefficacy of the remedy provided by the Redeemer's sacrifice, but by their own perverse attachment to their sins. That God hath no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but is desirous that the sinner should turn from his evil ways and live, is repeatedly asserted in scripture, and confirmed by the most solemn adjuration even of the Almighty himself. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth: but that the wicked turn from his way,

[†] Heb. x. 29.

and live⁹.” And the most incontrovertible evidence in support of the affirmation is contained in the plain fact, which we have been considering, that the Son of God took our nature upon him, and descended from the bosom of his Father’s love, and from the right hand of his glory ; and thus came, as the Son of man, to seek and to save *that*, ALL THAT, which was lost. “ Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways : for why WILL ye die, O house of Israel ? ” was his exhortation to his peculiar people in old times.—Why WILL ye die, O sons of Adam ? is his exhortation to every creature under the new covenant : seeing that God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and “ wouldeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

It remains that I make a brief application of what has now been laid before you ; and so close the present discourse.

⁹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11. ¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11. ² Pet. iii. 9.

And first, considering the desolate condition of mankind, in consequence of the fall of Adam; the corruption of their nature, and their actual sins; their religious and moral blindness and pollutions; their abandonment by the Holy Spirit of God, and their subjection to the evil spirit; their exposure to the wrath and indignation of God in this world, and to the sentence of condemnation in that which is to come; we cannot but see and feel the necessity of a Redeemer, "mighty to save:" and considering how perfect and how universal is the salvation wrought by the Son of man, who came and suffered for that merciful purpose, in imputing to us his righteousness, in guiding us into his truth, in sanctifying us by his Spirit, and in justifying us before God, as preparatory steps to his finally receiving us into glory; we cannot do less than acknowledge with devout and thankful hearts the greatness of that salvation; and prostrate ourselves in the most lowly adoration before that divine Being, who came to seek and to save that which

¹ Isaiah lxiii. 1.

was lost; and who extends the blessings of his sacrifice to the whole race of mankind, to every individual descendant of Adam.

But considering farther, that the gracious purpose of his coming may be not fulfilled, as far at least as each of us is the object of it, by reason of our own hardness and impenitent hearts, of our transgressions and disobedience; and that our Saviour has most affectionately admonished us, that, in consequence of this, "few there are who find the way of life"; we ought to feel the most earnest desire, that we may be found diligent in "running the race that is set before us, continually looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith"; and fearing, "lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." Such is the effect, which should be produced in our minds by a consideration of the purpose, for which our blessed Lord suffered: for that purpose, we may be assured, will be, and will then only be, effectually accomplished in us, if we thus strive to profit

• Matt. vii. 14. • Heb. xii. 1, 2. • Heb. iv. 1.

by his coming; remembering on the one hand, that “if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries²:” and constantly trusting on the other hand, not in any fancied righteousness of our own, but in the merits of our blessed Redeemer; being well assured that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved¹,” but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To whom, in the Unity of the Father and the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be all, honour power and glory for ever!

² Heb. x. 6, 7.

¹ Acts iv. 12.



SERMON VI.

THE LOVE OF GOD THE MOTIVE TO MAN'S SALVATION.

ROM. v. 7, 8.

*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ;
yet peradventure for a good man some would
even dare to die :*

*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that,
while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

IN my last discourse, I endeavoured to lay before you in detail the purpose for which Christ suffered ; namely, as generally expressed in his own declaration, that he might “ save that which was lost.” I propose on this occasion to consider the motive, which impelled him to undertake those sufferings in order to the salvation of mankind. Various scriptures concur in ex-

pressly assigning the salvation of mankind to the divine love as its motive. “ God commendeth his love towards us, in that Christ died for us ;” as we read it in St. Paul’s declaration in my text. “ In this was manifested the love of God towards us,” saith St. John, “ because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him^a.” And again, “ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us^b.” And our blessed Lord himself tells us, that “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life^c.”

Such are the declarations of scripture, expressly asserting “ the love of God” to have been the moving cause of our salvation : and the representations, which it gives us of our own lost condition, cooperate with these declarations in assuring us, that there was nothing in us which could deserve so gracious an interposition ;—nothing in us,

^a 1 John iv. 9.

^b 1 John iii. 16.

^c John iii. 16.

which could move him, to undertake our salvation, and to bestow upon us everlasting life; unless it were our very forlorn and desperate condition itself, which by depriving us of all other hopes of restoration, rendered us fit objects for the exercise of almighty love.

For what expectation could we have of the divine favour; what could we claim, but a sentence of condemnation; what could we merit but death, everlasting death;—we, who were already “dead in trespasses and sins^d”;—we, who are altogether “corrupt and abominable^e,” corrupt by inheritance of our nature and abominable by our actual iniquities;—we, who were “the children of disobedience^f”;—we, who were the willing slaves of Satan; and “alienated from the life of God^g?” Surely whatever blessing was conferred on creatures, whose situation is thus described by the word of truth, it could not have been conferred upon them for any quality,

^d Eph. ii. 1.

^e Psalm liii. 1.

^f Eph. ii. 2.

^g Eph. iv. 18.

which they themselves possessed ; it could not have been in consideration of any righteousness of theirs ; but it must be regarded as an act, and a testimony, of the exceeding abundance of God's goodness ; of the riches of his mercy, and of the greatness of his love. And thus we find the holy Apostle repeatedly dwelling upon the free grace of God, as the agent of our salvation ; excluding the works of our corrupt and unregenerate nature from any pretensions to the having influenced him to undertake our redemption ; and referring the glory of it entirely to the mercy and loving-kindness of God.

And in the divine mercy we find an adequate motive to undertake the most stupendous enterprises, and to accomplish the most arduous designs. Infinite as God must be in all his perfections, wherever any one of his attributes is engaged, it cannot fail of executing the purpose, to which it is addressed. Whatever his will intends, whatever his wisdom meditates, whatever his power essays, whatever his justice denounces, cannot but come to pass ; nor

can that fail, whatever his mercy ordains. Nay, when the Apostle teaches us that "God is love^b;" he appears desirous of magnifying beyond measure that most adorable of the divine perfections: and surely any the most surprising effect may be expected from the exercise of a quality, which is thus represented in the language of inspiration not merely as an attribute of the Deity, but as concentrating (if I may so express myself) the other divine attributes, and identifying the Godhead with itself.

But the immensity of the divine love will be more satisfactorily evinced; and it will at the same time more conspicuously appear, how ineffectual any thing in ourselves could have been towards meriting our redemption, and influencing him to redeem us; if we reflect upon the supreme dignity of Him, who undertook the work of our salvation;—the extreme state of humiliation and misery, to which he descended in order to accomplish it;—and the

^b 1 John iv. 8.

relation borne to him by us, for whom that amazing testimony of the most disinterested goodness was enterprised and perfected.

I. And, first, let us most seriously meditate on the supreme dignity of Him, who undertook the work of our salvation. The Son, the only Son, the only begotten Son, the beloved Son of the everlasting Father ; “ the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person ; ” co-essential, and co-existent with him before all worlds ; equal to the Father, and dwelling in his Father’s bosom ; himself at the same time very and eternal God ; the Lord, the Lord Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts ; the true, the great, the mighty God, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, God over all ; distinguished by all the appellations, invested with all the attributes, performing all the acts, and intitled to all the honour and adoration, which belong appropriately and exclusively to the only one God :—such are the elevated forms of expression, and such are the characteristic marks, whereby the goodly fellowship of the prophets and

the glorious company of the apostles labour to represent the dignity of that divine Person, who took upon him the work of our salvation.

II. But what, secondly, was the state of humiliation, to which he consented to be degraded, in order to accomplish our redemption? If we can conceive the most entire contrast, and the most irreconcilable opposition, between the highest and the lowest, between the grandest and the most ignoble, between the most honoured and the most despised, conditions; we shall be able to form an adequate conception of that state of degradation, of that "emptying of himselfⁱ," as the apostle expresses it, which Christ chose, that he might redeem us. He, who was the Son of God, submitted to become the Son of man: He, who dwelt in the bosom of his heavenly Father, submitted to be imprisoned in the womb of an earthly mother: He, who was "in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant^k:" He, who was possessed by inheritance of all the names and titles

ⁱ Phil. ii. 7. *ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν.*

^k Phil. ii. 6, 7.

of the Deity, permitted himself to be saluted not as mere man alone, but as a seditious person, a malefactor, a blasphemer : He, who was invested with all the attributes of the Deity, was contented to be scorned and derided, as the vilest of the sons of men ; while his wisdom was accounted folly ; his glory was turned into shame ; his truth was impeached of falsehood ; his omnipotence was upbraided as ineffectual impotence ; his holiness was arraigned, and appeared lost in the sins of men, which he bore in his own body on the tree ; his eternity seemed annihilated in an ignominious death ; and his omnipresence was judged capable of being confined within the limits of hell and the grave. He, to whom are ascribed all the works and operations of the Deity, was contented to be the lowest, and the most despised, among all the works of his own hands. The Creator of the universe, he had not in his own world “ where to lay his head ;” the Author of life, and the future Raiser of the dead, he “ tasted death” in his own person ; the future Judge of the world, he stood at the tribunal of one of his guilty creatures, and underwent the

sentence of condemnation with the wicked ; the Saviour of all men, he was himself cast out with those that are lost. He, to whom is ascribed the adoration which belongs to the only true God, was contented to be esteemed a blasphemer of his heavenly Father with whom he is one : He, whom " the angels of God worship," submitted to be insulted with the mockery of royalty, and the shadow of an earthly dominion : He, in whose name " the devils believe and tremble," submitted to be insulted by the degrading invitation to " fall down and worship" their prince, in token of subjection and allegiance.

III. Such being the incomparably exalted dignity of Christ, and such being the incomparable degradation to which he condescended ;—and that (as hath been before observed) to purchase the salvation of mankind ; it is an obvious inquiry, which I proposed next to take in hand, concerning the relation borne to him by those, for whom this amazing testimony of loving-kindness was enterprised and perfected.

Was it then, let us demand, for his affectionate children, who constantly persevered in serving him, nor at any time transgressed his commandments? Was it for his faithful servants, who honoured and obeyed him, as their master; for his loyal subjects, who revered and paid allegiance to him as their prince? Was it for men, created only “a little lower than the angels,” and “in the image and likeness of God;” and still retaining their primitive similitude to their divine original? Even if this had been our condition; and if mankind had been exposed to ruin “without any offence or fault of theirs;” still for the eternal Son of the eternal Father to descend from the bosom of his love and from the right hand of his majesty, and to “make himself of no reputation, and to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” for their preservation; presents us with such a marvellous exercise of love, as could never have been conceived by a human imagination, and which angels might have scrutinized with astonishment. How much more then, when he came to save not the

affectionate child, but the wilful prodigal; not the faithful servant, but the hardened apostate; not the obedient subject, but the audacious rebel; when he came to save mankind, not pure and spotless as they proceeded from the hands of their Creator, but debased by hereditary corruption, and contaminated with personal guilt!

It is in this view that the Apostle represents the subject in the text. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners," and, as he farther observes in a following verse, "while we were enemies, Christ died for us." And inasmuch as we are by nature sinners, we are also by nature enemies of God. If it be the act of an enemy, to slight, resist, and renounce the authority of our lawful sovereign; if it be the act of an enemy, to range ourselves under the banners of a potentate, in open hostility to our own; if it be the act of an enemy, to proceed to avowed defiance, and

to bear rebellious arms against the majesty of our Prince; we who are "by nature the children of disobedience," in subjection to "the powers of darkness," "alienated from the life of God," and the ministers and slaves of sin, are by an obvious inference the natural enemies of God.

And standing in this relation to God, as rebels and enemies, it evidently appears how inefficacious any thing in us could have been towards meriting our redemption; and influencing him to redeem us. "Ye have not chosen me," said our blessed Saviour, vindicating to himself the glory of our redemption; "but I have chosen you¹:" and "herein is love," said his beloved disciple St. John, ascribing to him the honour, and specifying at the same time the motive, of the act; "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins^m." There was in us indeed that which well deserved the wrath of God, and might well have left us ex-

¹ John xv. 16.

^m 1 John iv. 10.

posed to the severity of his displeasure. But to reverse the sentence of condemnation, and to admit us again into his favour; to cleanse us from iniquity, and to justify us by the blood of Christ; to exempt us from punishment, and to promise us a reward; to blot out the hand-writing of death that was against us, and to write our names in the book of life :—surely this could have been no other than the work of his mercy and loving-kindness alone, exercising itself in free and disinterested grace towards us miserable sinners. “ O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever! Amen.”

The foregoing remarks may be sufficient to show the exceeding great love of “ God

^a Rom. xi. 33—36.

our Saviour" in undertaking and accomplishing the work of our redemption; and to exclude any fancied righteousness of our own from participating in the atonement for our sins. And I might here properly conclude; if it were not that I still wish to detain you for the sake of those valuable practical inferences, which the apostles of our Lord instruct us to deduce from the doctrine.

And 1st, the contemplation of this surprising love of God towards us ought to warm and expand our hearts, and fill them with the most earnest love towards him in return, and with the most zealous determination to obey him. "We love him," said St. John, who could speak experimentally of the effect, which ought to be produced by the doctrine; "We love him, because he first loved us^o;" "and this," he presently subjoins, "is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous^p."

^o 1 John iv. 19.

^p 1 John v. 3.

Secondly, the contemplation of the love of God, as having already interposed to save us by the sending of his Son, should fill us with a devout confidence in him; persuaded that he, who has conferred upon us of his free grace the greatest of all blessings, will not withhold from us others, which he may know to be for our good. This is the inference of St. Paul. "If God be for us," he triumphantly demands, "who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

A third inference, to be drawn from a contemplation of the love of God exemplified in the work of our salvation, is a further "confidence," that he will not leave it imperfect; but that if we love him and keep his commandments, "he which hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." This again is the inference of St. Paul, who argues upon the ground of our com-

^a Rom. viii. 32.

^r Phil. i. 6.

parative situations in nature and in grace. " God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement^s."

Fourthly, the contemplation of the love of God employed for our redemption, and the persuasion that our salvation is " the gift of God," connected with the belief, that " we all had sinned and come short of his glory, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through

^s Rom. v. 8—11.

the forbearance of God^t:"—a consideration of these things, I say, should fill us with all humility and self-abasement; and totally "exclude all boasting" in our own righteousness, and all regard to our own works, as the meritorious cause of our acceptance with God.

But then, fifthly, whilst we renounce all hopes of salvation as merited by our works, we must be cautious not to disregard them, as if they were not necessary to our salvation. The inference of St. Paul upon this point also should not escape our observation. "By grace are ye saved through faith," he says to the Ephesians, who had been converted from heathenism to a profession of the Gospel: "and that," that is your salvation, is "not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For," he continues, guarding his former language from misconception, and pointing out the duties of a Christian life, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ

^t Rom. iii. 23—25. ^u Ib. 27.

Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them^x."

There is another and a kindred inference, for which we are indebted to the same Apostle, and which he appears to have insisted on, for the purpose of securing the doctrine before us from being perverted and abused, as it possibly might be, into an excuse for ungodliness of life. For having compared the transgression of Adam with the righteousness of Christ, and remarked, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound^y;" "what shall we say then?" he proceeds: "shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid^z." And then enlarging upon the obligation imposed upon Christians, of "walking in newness of life," he concludes with this admonition; "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but

^x Eph. ii: 8, 9, 10. ^y Rom. v. 20. ^z Rom. vi. 1, 2.

yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God^a." Christ Jesus did undoubtedly come into the world to save sinners; and the penitent sinner may derive consolation and peace from reflecting on the unbounded love of God exerting itself for the salvation of those who were lost. But it is a most dangerous delusion, and it has no countenance from scripture, and it is utterly inconsistent with the scheme of redemption through the blood of Christ, to suppose, that that blood will be ultimately effectual, and that the grace of God will be finally extended, to any, but the repentant and reformed sinner.

There is one other inference, which I would mention from a contemplation of the love of God in sending his Son to be a propitiation for our sins; and it is one, which is drawn for us by St. John, who says, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we

^a Rom. vi. 12, 13.

ought also to love one another^b." There are indeed many reasons, why a devout sense of God's affection for us, should fill us with affection towards our brethren, heirs of the same misery with ourselves, and heirs of the same salvation. But it is very worthy of observation, that this disciple beloved of Christ again and again enforces his admonition, that "we love one another," as the proper fruit, evidence, and perfection, of our gratitude and love towards God. For consistently with the angelic hymn, which announced the incarnation of Christ by the celebration of "glory to God, and good-will to men;" he seems to have been anxious to hold forth the inseparable union between piety and charity; and to impress upon the minds of his beloved children in Christ this most important lesson, that no sense of duty to our neighbour is worthy of a Christian, which is not supported and consecrated by a sense of duty to God.

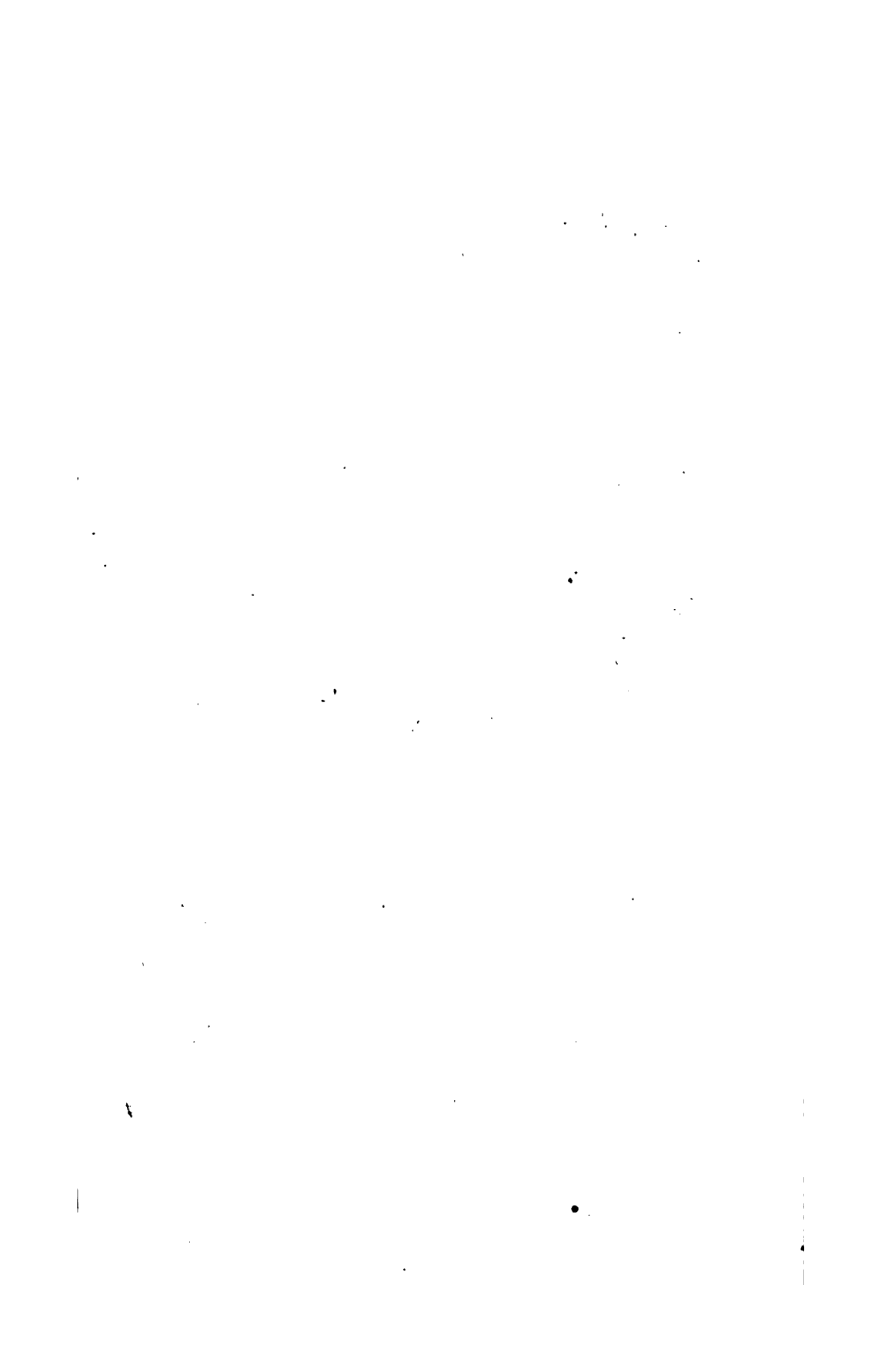
Upon the whole, a grateful sense of God's love towards us should ever be pre-

^b 1 John iv. 11.

sent to our minds :—of his love commended towards us, not merely in our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but especially and above all in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. As it was the motive which influenced him to have mercy upon us, and to save us, so should it also influence us to serve him as his faithful servants and most affectionate children. Nor shall we ever find so powerful a motive, nor so un-failing a principle, of every Christian virtue, as to “love God, because he first loved us.”

‘ 1 John iv. 19.





SERMON VII.

THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR SAVIOUR UNEXAMPLED.

LAMENT. i. 12.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow, like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

AT the very hearing or reading of these words, we cannot fail of perceiving that they are the voice of one in great and extreme distress; of distress on two several accounts: being first in such a state of affliction, as was never paralleled, "see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow;" and then, notwithstanding the severity of his affliction having no one to regard and

comfort him. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

To be afflicted, and so afflicted, as to exceed all comparison, is grievous: in that affliction to find none that will respect or care for us—what can be more grievous? In all our sufferings it is a comfort to us, that we have a parallel; that nothing hath befallen us, but such as that others have felt the like; that no temptation, no calamity hath taken us, but such as is common to man:—but here, in the instance of the sufferer before us, "there never was sorrow like unto his sorrow." Again; in our greatest afflictions, it is a mitigation of our sufferings, even to meet with some regard. We naturally desire, if we cannot be delivered, if we cannot be relieved, yet at least to be comforted; it convinces us, that there are yet some, who are touched with a sense of our misery; who at least are desirous of our welfare, and would relieve and deliver us if they could.—But the sufferer here has not so much as this belief to comfort him. His affliction is neglected by all those,

“ who pass by the way,” as if it were “ nothing to them :” no one relieves, no one pities him : he is even, as it were, an outcast both of heaven and earth.

I demand then, in the words of the Ethiopian eunuch, “ of whom speaketh the Prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?” And I remark in answer, that it is the practice of the ancient writers of the Church, to apply, and in an especial manner to appropriate, this speech to our Saviour Christ; and to consider the day, which is here mentioned, “ the day of the Lord’s fierce anger,” as the season of Christ’s passion. And in truth, to take the words strictly as they lie, they cannot agree to or be verified of any, but of him, and him only. Others indeed without impropriety might be allowed to say the same words; but then it must be in a limited and qualified sense: for in full and perfect propriety of speech, he, and none but he, can use them. None can say (neither Jeremiah himself, nor any other man) as Christ can, “ see, if there be any sorrow like unto

my sorrow :” no day of wrath was like to his day ; no sorrow can be compared to his.

It is not meant to be denied, that in the primary and literal meaning of the words, they are employed by Jeremiah, in the person of his own people, being then come to great misery ; and of the holy city, then laid waste and desolate by the Chaldeans. But this is only agreeable to the general correspondence between the Old and the New Testaments. “ Out of Egypt have I called my son,” was literally spoken of the people of Israel ; yet by the Evangelist it is applied to our Saviour Christ^a. “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” was first uttered by David^b ; yet the same words our Saviour applies to himself^c, and that with more truth and propriety than ever David could : and of those words of David, and of these of Jeremiah, there is one and the same reason.

^a Hos. xi. 1. Matt. ii. 15. ^b Ps. xxij. 1. ^c Matt. xxvii. 46.

The ground of which is the correspondence that prevails between Christ, and the patriarchs, prophets, and people before Christ. For they were themselves types; and their sufferings were figures, indicating the great future suffering of the Son of God: hence the offering of Isaac, the selling of Joseph, the calling of Israel out of Egypt, and that other complaint of David, and this of Jeremiah, are all applicable to him: so that he may take them to himself, and the Church may ascribe them to him, and that in terms more appropriate, and with truth more complete and exact, than they bore when spoken of David, or Jeremiah, or any of those to whom they were originally applied.

And this rule, and the practice of ancient writers in conformity with this rule, will be our warrant for applying the text to the present occasion; in which, agreeably to the plan before proposed, we are to consider the sufferings, that Christ underwent in testimony of his exceeding love, and for the saving of us who were lost. Let these

words then be to us, as they were to them, and as they properly are to all men, the words of our blessed Saviour; and let us represent him to ourselves from the midst of his sufferings, addressing himself to the careless and inconsiderate, the dissipated and the gay, who pass to and fro without regarding him, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

It is held forth to us in this complaint, as a characteristic of our Saviour's sorrows, that they were unexampled; without a parallel; such as are not allotted to other persons in affliction; that "there never was sorrow, like unto his sorrow." And the justice of the complaint will be made to appear by an examination of particulars, in the course of which we may contemplate him, as wounded in body; afflicted in soul; and bereft withal of every consolation, of every thing which might relieve or comfort him.

I. And first, with respect to the sufferings of his body. Look upon him, as he hangs upon the cross, where, having passed through the introduction to his sufferings, he is now finishing and consummating the whole; and your eye will perceive and tell you, that there is no whole part in his body, no place, where he might be smitten, and was not. "His back has been given to the smiters, and his cheeks to them, that have plucked off the hair^d:" his skin and flesh are rent with whips and scourges; "his hands and feet are pierced" with the nails; his head is gored with the thorns; his very heart thrust through with the spear:—"Behold the man!" It was the language of Pilate, when he brought him forth to the multitude after the commencement of his sufferings, thinking that the very spectacle of them, imperfect as they then were, would melt the hearts of his hardened persecutors.—"Behold the man!" His sufferings are now complete: not a species of torment is wanting, which the most ingenious malice can invent, and the most relentless cruelty perpetrate!

^d Isaiah l. 6.

And shall not the spectacle work upon the feelings of us, who profess ourselves his friends ?

II. Still it may be said that these his bodily sufferings, severe as they must be allowed to be, are not without example : and to them it is possible that a parallel may be found. Not so however to the afflictions of his soul. And indeed the pain of the body is of a less afflicting nature than the pain of the soul. " Give me any plague but the plague of the heart," said the wise son of Sirach ; for (saith Solomon) " the spirit of a man will sustain all his other infirmities ; but a wounded spirit who can bear^f ?" And in this respect it may be safely said, that never was sorrow like unto Christ's sorrow.

And here let us consider, both how well qualified the sufferings, which he underwent, were to produce anguish of soul ; and then, how evidently he showed the anguish, by which he was oppressed.

* Ecclus. xxv. 13.

^f Prov. xviii. 14.

Now the punishment of the cross was not only attended by the most excruciating bodily torment, but it was a punishment of the most ignominious character; and was in the example before us aggravated by circumstances of peculiar bitterness; so as to be incomparably fitted for enhancing the pangs of the body by the greater anguish of the soul. There is no one, however mean and vile, who, if he is insulted in his misery, is not more grieved by the insult, than by the misery itself: but by the generous nature insult is accounted the keenest suffering; and there is no grief, which the noble spirit would not bear rather than contumelious and contemptuous usage.

Let us look then to the nature and circumstances of our Saviour's punishment. And was it not a foul disgrace and scandal to inflict on him the shame of that servile base punishment of the whip, which was not allowed to be offered to any but to slaves and bondmen?—But that, which is *servile*, may still consist with honesty. Was it not then a more foul disgrace and

scandal indeed, to appoint him for his death, that dishonest, that infamous death, the death of malefactors, nay of the worst of malefactors? the most ignominious opprobrious death of all others, so that the very persons were scandalous, who suffered it? To take him as a thief; to hang him between two thieves, nay to count him worse than the very worst of thieves; to say and to cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas?"—If base, if dishonest, let these two suffice: use him not disgracefully; make him not an object of ridicule; pour not contempt upon him. Yet that they did too:—their shouting and their outcries;—their hurrying him about from Annas to Caiaphas, from him to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod again;—their robing him in purple;—then blindfolding him and buffeting him;—their bowing to him in derision;—and then spitting in his face:—what was this, but to treat him so far indeed from "the Lord of Glory," that it was to treat him "as a worm and no man^s?" "Died Abner, as a fool dieth^b?" said David of Abner in great regret. O no! Yet

^s Ps. xxii. 6.

^b 2 Sam. iii. 3.

surely so our blessed Saviour died ; and that he so died, equals, nay it surpasses, even the worst of his torments. Is there any thing yet worse ? There is. For though contempt be bad, yet despite is beyond it, as far as earnest is beyond sport. That was sport ; this was malice. I call it despite, when in the midst of his misery, in the very depth of all his distress, they vouchsafed him not the least compassion ; but as if he had been the most despised and abject of men, the very out-cast of heaven and earth, stood staring and looking upon him, wagging their heads, and shooting out their lips ; railing at, and reviling him ; scoffing at, and scorning him ; nay, in the very moment of his prayers deriding him ; even making scorn of his most mournful complaint and cry, which he uttered for the very anguish of his spirit.—But is this all ? No ; all this is but what the Apostle calls “ the offence, the scandal of the crossⁱ ;” the worst still remains, and that is “ the curse of the cross^k :” that the death, which he died, was not only servile, ignominious, oppro-

ⁱ Gal. v. 11.

^k Gal. iii. 13.

brious, hateful, but even execrable and accursed.—Such it was in the opinion of men. Nor is that the whole : for man is but man ; his glory is oftentimes shame, and his shame glory. But what God curseth, that is accursed indeed ; and this death was cursed by God himself, as the Apostle moreover tells us : so that when all the aggravating circumstances, which embittered his death, are collected together, this is the extreme point of his shame, and the consummation of his sufferings, that “ he was made a curse¹.”

And now were not these things calculated to vex and afflict his soul ? Unquestionably they were : and that his soul was afflicted by the very prospect of them, there is not one of the evangelists but beareth witness. “ He was troubled in spirit^m,” saith St. John : “ He was in an agonyⁿ,” saith St. Luke : He was “ sore amazed and very heavy^o,” saith St. Mark : “ His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death^p,” as it is repre-

¹ Gal. iii. 3.

^m John xiii. 21.

ⁿ Luke xxii. 44.

^o Mark xiv. 33.

^p Matt. xxvi. 38. Mark xiv. 34.

sented by the same evangelist and by St. Matthew. Here are trouble, amazement, agony, sorrow, and deadly sorrow; and such sorrow unquestionably, as that "there was never any other like to this."

For we may form some estimate of his sorrow from his sweat in the garden, which is without example, without parallel. No manner of violence offered to his body; no man touching him or being near him; in a cold night; being exposed to the air and upon the bare earth; to "sweat as it were great drops of blood," so abundantly that they penetrated through his garments and fell down to the ground; (whether it be only intended by the sacred writer, that his drops of sweat were large and clammy, like clots of gore; or whether we understand, and I know not why we should not understand, that in this his unspeakable agony, so extraordinary was the commotion of animal nature, that blood was in an amazing manner forced through the pores together with the sweat; still whichever be the interpretation adopted,) read, inquire, and consider, if ever there were

sweat, like this sweat of his? Never the like sweat certainly, and therefore never the like sorrow. In that hour, wherein he appears to have been struggling with the powers of darkness, with the hosts of hell leagued together to afflict, and (had it been possible) to defeat him, what his feelings were it would be dangerous to define: we know them not; we should be too bold, were we to endeavour at describing them. It was discreetly and reverently that the ancient Fathers of the Greek Church acted in their liturgy; wherein, after having recounted all the particular pains as they are set down in his passion, and by all and by each of them called for mercy, they summed up their supplications with this petition; "By thine *unknown* sorrows and sufferings, felt by thee, but not distinctly *known* to us, Have mercy upon us, and save us!" And, although much more might be said, let this at present suffice for his pains of body and of soul. As to those of the body, some perhaps may have endured the like: but the sorrows of his soul are unknown sorrows; and as to them, no one has, nor ever shall suffer "any sorrow, like

unto *his* sorrow which was done unto *him.*"

III. And so let us proceed to that other view, which was proposed; wherein we behold him bereft of every consolation, of all which might relieve or comfort him.

It was before observed, that to be afflicted and so afflicted, as to exceed all comparison, is a grievous case: but in that affliction to find none that will respect or care for us—nothing indeed can be more grievous: and that consideration will serve to show further, that "there never was sorrow like unto Christ's sorrow." Comfort is that by which, through the mediation of some friendly consolation and support, we are strengthened in the midst of our distresses, and the better enabled to bear them out. And who is there, even the most destitute creature amongst us, but receives some comfort, some support at some one's hands?

Yet such was not our Saviour's case in this season of his bereaving; for even that,

which is left to the meanest of the sons of men, was not left unto him. As to human comfort, *his own* supported him not : they among whom he had gone about during his life, healing them, teaching them, feeding them, doing them all good—it is they that cry, “ Not this man, but Barabbas ; away with him ; crucify him ; his blood be upon us and upon our children : ”—it is they that in the midst of his agony, “ shake their heads at him and cry, Ah thou that destroyest the temple, save thyself : ”—it is they, that deriding his exclamation of despondence in that his most disconsolate state, barbarously mock him, and say, “ Let us see whether Elias will come to save him.”

But these were his enemies ; the ignorant and deluded multitude. Be it so : turn we therefore to his friends ; to those who were nearest and dearest to him ; whom he had “ chosen and ordained that they should bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain ⁹.” Even of these, one bought and

⁹ John xv. 16.

sold him : one denied and forswore him : all fell away, and forsook him.

But still all human comfort is frail and transient at the best : and in all heaviness the true comfort is divine consolation, is comfort from above. But here also he was afflicted in this his sorrow : of such consolation this his day of suffering bereaved him too. And that was his most bitter complaint of all : not that his friends upon earth, but that his Father in heaven had forsaken him ; that neither earth nor heaven yielded him any regard ; but that between the sorrows of his soul, and whatever might in any way refresh him, there was as it were a great gulph fixed, whilst he was left in a state of desolation, destitute abandoned and forlorn.—Evident, too evident, from that his most dreadful cry, at which the powers of nature were shaken, at which the sun was darkened, and the earth quaked, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ” Weigh well that cry ; consider it, and answer, if there were ever

¹ Matt. xxvii. 46.

a cry, like that of his ?—Never surely the like cry, and therefore never the like sorrow.

It is strange, very strange, that nothing like this is recorded of the Christian martyrs, who nevertheless endured most exquisite pains in their martyrdoms ; yet we see with what courage, with what cheerfulness, how even singing and rejoicing, they are reported to have passed through their torments. Would we know the reason ? it is assigned by a father of the Church, who says, “ God delivered them not, but he did not forsake them.” He delivered not their bodies, but he forsook not their souls : but distilled into them the dew of his heavenly comfort, an abundant supply for all that they could endure, But here, “ *He hath afflicted me,*” saith the Prophet, prefiguring Christ : “ *Thou hast forsaken me,*” saith Christ in his own person : here is no comfort, no supply at all,

It may serve to heighten our sense of the Redeemer’s sufferings, if having seen them to be thus unexampled in magnitude

and bitterness, we consider briefly the quality of the sufferer. Afflictions indeed are generally thought to be in proportion to the person afflicted: as the person is, so is the passion: and any, even the least degree of injury or disgrace offered to a person of distinction, is infinitely greater than the same offered to one of mean condition. And here again we shall leave all parallel behind us.

“ Behold the man!” said Pilate. He was a man, as we are: and even had he been no more than man, nay had he been literally, what figuratively he was, “ a worm and no man,” a brute beast that hath no understanding, it were piteous to behold him trampled on and tortured as he was.

Pilate called him a man, and the wife of Pilate added “ a just man.” “ Have thou nothing to do with that just man.” And this carries us one degree farther; for

though we pity and feel for the punishment even of malefactors themselves, our compassion is much more sensible for those, who suffer, and yet are innocent. And he was innocent, both Pilate and Herod being his judges.

Now among the innocent, the more noble the person, the more grievous the spectacle: and never do we feel such compassion, as for those of an elevated condition. And such was the sufferer before us: by birth one of the most noble among the sons of men; the royal descendant from a stock of illustrious kings. Pilate styled him a "king;" and he had reason in refusing to alter his superscription.

And this might seem high enough; if we could not go infinitely higher. For he is yet more; more than the highest of the sons of men; he is the Son of the most high God. Pilate could see no farther than "Behold the man:" the Centurion caught a view of his more exalted nature, when

he said, " Truly this man was the Son of God!" And here all words forsake us, and every tongue becometh speechless.

We can no otherwise express it, than by reasoning from the less to the greater; as in the following manner: of this book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, one especial occasion was the death of Josiah, king of Judah: " but behold, a greater than Josiah is here!"

Of king Josiah, as an especial cause for mourning, the Prophet says, " The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, is taken away." But, behold, here is not merely the anointed of the Lord, but the Lord, the anointed; not the Lord's Christ alone, but the Lord Christ himself; and that, not coming to an honourable death in battle, as Josiah did; but to a most disgraceful death, the death of the vilest malefactors; and not slain at once as Josiah was, but tormented and mangled in the most dreadful manner; wounded in body, wounded in soul, utterly desolate and for-

† Mark xv. 39.

‡ Lam. iv. 20.

saken. O consider this, and confess that it is truly said, "never was sorrow like my sorrow." Never, never the like person; and if as the person, so the passion be, then never the like passion to his.

It is truly affirmed, that any one, even the least drop of blood, even the least pain of the body only, of this so exalted a person, had been enough to raise it beyond all comparison. And that is enough; but that is not all: for now add the three other considerations; to this so exalted a person, add the torment of body, the agony of soul, and the cry betokening utter desolation, and contemplate the sum of all: and it is beyond all question, that the like was not, shall not, cannot be: it is far beyond what ever was or can be. It is in truth beyond all conceivable parallel; beyond all possible example: men indeed may drowsily hear it, and be coldly affected by it: they may "pass by the way," and pretend that "it is nothing to them:" but "angels desire" to behold and "to look into" it, and the principali-

* 1 Pet. i. 12.

ties and powers of heaven hear thereof and worship.

But, my brethren, is it indeed nothing to us; is it, can it be, nothing to any child of Adam, that these sufferings were endured by Christ? Is it nothing to us, that our sins laid upon him this weight of affliction, tormented his body, agonized his soul, bereaved him of comfort, and provoked the fierceness of God's wrath against him? Is it nothing to us, that by his stripes we are healed, by his sweat we are refreshed, by his being forsaken we have received grace; that the day which to him was the day of God's fierce anger, is become the day of our salvation? Is it nothing to us, that as this was the day of God's fierce anger against him, only for his love to us, so there is another day coming, and it will soon be here, a day of the like fierce anger against us, if we do not return his love? To return his love indeed to the full extent, for his love like his sorrow exceeds all example, is what we cannot do. The more we love him, the better: but we can all show, that we do not

slight him; by striving to withdraw ourselves from sinful pursuits; to free our minds from guilty thoughts; to set him before us; to think on him; to thank him; to worship and serve him in his ordinances; to purify our hearts and lives after his example; and to profit by the grace which he supplies us with. This is what we all can, and ought to do, at this and at every season: and never should we forget what the Son of God suffered, in order that what *he* then felt for us, *we* might never feel; and that what *he* now enjoys in the bosom of his Father, *we* also might enjoy for ever!

SERMON VIII.

THE HUMILITY AND PATIENCE OF OUR SAVIOUR.

PHIL. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ
Jesus ;*

*Who being in the form of God, thought it not
robbery to be equal with God ;*

*But made himself of no reputation, and took upon
him the form of a servant, and was made in the
likeness of men ;*

*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled
himself, and became obedient unto death, even
the death of the cross.*

WHEN St. Paul desired to inculcate most forcibly upon his disciples that lowliness of mind, which is among the most amiable and the most appropriate qualities of the Christian character, he judged

that his purpose could be answered in no other way so effectually, as by setting clearly and strongly before them the example of their blessed Lord. This he accordingly did in the very impressive passage just recited; wherein we may contemplate a Being of the most exalted nature, under a variety of particulars, exhibiting proofs of the greatest condescension. For “the form of God” he takes upon him “the form of a servant;”—he divests himself of his “equality with God” to be “made in the likeness and to be found in the fashion of a man;” the Lord of Glory, he “makes himself of no reputation;” the Head of all principality and power, he “clothes himself with humility;” the Author and Prince of life, he “becomes obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Look carefully at the picture; survey it in all its parts; analyze it, and examine the particulars, of which it is composed; and you will perceive, how well it is adapted to the end proposed by the Apostle:—God in the likeness of men; God in

the form of a servant; submitting voluntarily to disgrace, dishonour, and death, a tormenting and opprobrious death; surely no more effectual means can be devised of encouraging lowliness of mind in the disciple, than such a representation of this quality in the character and conduct of the master.

It is not however primarily with this intent that I now bring it forward, although before I quit the subject I may have occasion to employ it in that manner; but it is in order to set before you a general idea of that characteristic temper, which throughout his season of humiliation distinguished the conduct of our Saviour; and which, according to the plan before proposed, it is my design in the present discourse to examine somewhat in detail. That temper will probably be better elucidated, and appear in a stronger light, if the consideration of it be introduced with some preliminary remarks upon our Saviour's sufferings. For the difficulty of maintaining composure of mind, and in

consequence the admiration of the beholder, must increase in proportion to the severity of the afflictions endured. Although therefore I dwelt upon that subject specifically and more at large in my last discourse, I persuade myself, that a recurrence to it in a more summary way will not now appear unseasonable: unseasonable indeed at no time can it be, to discourse upon the sufferings of our Saviour before an assembly of Christians; who should be distinguished by a readiness to "glory" in nothing so much as "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It was long before their consummation upon the cross, that the sufferings of our blessed Saviour commenced. There indeed they were raised to an unexampled height; but his life also had been an almost uninterrupted series of distress, disgrace, and persecution. The moment of his first appearing upon earth foreshowed what was to be his condition during his abode upon it. He was born in a stable and laid to rest in a manger. The first months of his

mortal existence prefigured “the contradiction of sinners” which he was to endure, while it continued. He was compelled to flee for his life, for “Herod sought the young child to destroy him^b.”

The rest of his existence here was spent agreeably to this beginning. As to the common comforts and conveniences of life, so far was he from having them in abundance, that he “had not where to lay his head^c.” As to the common tokens of respect, he was ranked amongst publicans and sinners; whilst if the Pharisee invited him to meat, he withheld from him the customary pledges of hospitality; for he neither washed his feet with water, nor anointed his head with oil, nor greeted him with the kiss of welcome^d. As to the friendship of those about him, he was (as it had been strongly foretold of him) “a worm and no man; a very scorn of men and the outcast of the people^e.” Did he look for countenance to his country at large? by the rulers he

^a Heb. xii. 3.

^b Matt. ii. 13.

^c Matt. viii. 20.

^d Luke vii. 46.

^e Psalm xxii. 6.

was persecuted; by the multitude he was sometimes followed indeed, but at others they abandoned, insulted, and would have stoned him^f. Did he retire to the residence of his family? He was treated by his fellow-citizens with dishonour and reproofs; and was impeded in the execution of his ministry by their unbelief and hardness of heart^g. Did he seek consolation in his afflictions from his immediate companions, from those whom he had chosen to be the associates of his life, the witnesses of his miracles, the hearers of his doctrines, and the propagators of his religion? He was betrayed by one of them; denied by another; forsaken by all. To sum up the catalogue of his miseries during life in words, which had long before predicted them, in words as true as they are forcible and impressive, "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him, he was despised and we esteemed him not^h."

^f John viii. 59. x. 31. ^g Matt. xiii. 58. ^h Isaiah
liii. 3.

But wretched in an earthly view as was the life of Jesus, his death was still more afflicting.

Had he during his life been subject to actual bodily sufferings? Stretched upon the cross in an agonizing posture; the weather searching his previous wounds and sores; his hands and his feet pierced, so that (as it was said of Joseph) "the iron entered into his soul¹;" his forehead bleeding with the thorns; and all these not stupefying and transient, but acute and lingering pains; so acute as to preclude repose, and so lingering as to endure through six long hours; he experienced a death tormenting in the extreme.

Had he during his life been vexed in his righteous spirit²? In the passion which immediately preceded his death, his "soul was exceeding sorrowful;" and being in an agony, an agony which caused him to sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, he prayed most earnestly and repeatedly to his Father, that

¹ Ps. cv. 18.

² Isaiah lxiii. 10.

the cup of the fierceness of God's wrath might pass from him.

Had he during his life been the object of scorn and derision, of contempt and contumely and malice? His death was attended by every aggravation of insult and reproach. By the Romans; under whose authority he suffered, the death of the cross was considered as a servile punishment: a punishment not fit to be inflicted upon a freeman, however criminal; but suited to slaves only, to those whom they esteemed the dregs and outcasts of mankind. By the Jews so inhuman a punishment was not practised, nor was it allowed by their law: but that which approached most nearly to it, the hanging up of the dead bodies of some that had been executed, was held most infamous and execrable. For, "Cursed," said the law, "is every one that hangeth on a tree¹:" cursed, that is, devoted to reproach and malediction: "accursed of God^m," as it is in the law of Moses; that is, seeming to be

¹ Gal. iii. 13.

^m Deut. xxi. 23.

rejected by God, and by his special providence exposed to affliction.

Had he during his life been subject to any imputations of guilt? His death was like that of the worst of criminals. He was accused of the most heinous crimes: as a violator of the divine laws; as having a design to subvert the religion and to “destroy the temple of Godⁿ ;” as an impostor, seducing and “perverting the nation^o ;” as a blasphemer^p, usurping the properties and prerogatives of God; as seditious, and rebellious, stirring up the people^q, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar^r, assuming to himself royal authority, and styling himself Christ a King; in a word as being guilty of the most enormous and complicated offences. “If,” said his persecutors to Pilate, “he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.” As a criminal then he was described and arraigned; as a criminal, though by a sentence wrested by malice and importunity against the will and

ⁿ Matt. xxvi. 61. ^o Luke xxiii. 2. ^p Matt. ix. 3.

^q Luke xxiii. 5. ^r Luke xxiii. 2. ^s John xviii. 30.

conscience of a timid judge, he was condemned; and as a criminal, he suffered death. "He was numbered with the transgressors¹."

Thus throughout his life did Christ appear "in the form of a servant;" and thus did he finally "become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

But exceeding great and unexampled as his sufferings were, they were not greater than the patience and humility, with which he endured them. "He endured the cross, despising the shame²," saith St. Paul:—"When he was reviled, he reviled not again," saith St. Peter, "when he suffered he threatened not³:"—"He humbled himself," saith St. Paul again, in my text: "he made himself of no reputation," or according to the literal and forcible signification of the original word, "he emptied himself⁴," not only divesting himself of his divine preeminence, of his equality with the Father; but taking on

¹ Isaiah liii. 12.

² Heb. xii. 2.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 23.

⁴ ἐκένωσε ἑαυτὸν.

him the form of a servant, and submitting with calm composure to all the pain, the misery and disgrace which attended his state of humiliation, and regardless of every evil, provided he could accomplish the great purpose of his manifestation, and make atonement for the sins of mankind.

His submission and humility towards God were displayed not in sudden and transitory bursts of occasional devotion, excited by the impulse of a momentary feeling, and interrupted by the avocations of business and pleasure; but it was an uniform habit of the mind, a settled principle; always alive, always vigorous and active. It was evinced in all his actions; and gave a colour to his whole character and behaviour. "Why callest thou me good?" was his question to one who addressed him under that title: "there is none good but one, that is God." According to this decision, not an opportunity did he suffer to escape him, of elevating the minds of his disciples and of the

* Matt. xix. 17.

people to the adoration of his heavenly Father; of instructing them in divine truths; and of persuading them to the practice of a holy life. Consistent and uniform throughout, not an opportunity did he suffer to escape him of exemplifying in his own conduct the duties which he enjoined on others, and of confirming his precepts by his practice. Witness his observance of all the exercises of piety, whether public or private; his habitual attendance on the service of the synagogue; his meditations, thanksgivings, and prayers. Witness the purity, the righteousness, the temperance, the chastity of his manners. Witness his eagerness to perform, his delight in performing, the will of Him that sent him. Witness the scrupulous care, with which he referred the glory of all his actions to his Father. Especially and above all, witness that surprising humility, wherewith he denied his own comfort and even his life; gave himself wholly up to the direction of the divine pleasure; and willingly and cheerfully awaited the hour of trouble, which was to glorify his Father's name.

In that his extreme agony, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; when nature shrunk from the prospect of his approaching sufferings, and would have turned aside from the cup of the fierceness of God's wrath, how amazing was the piety, how unexampled was the resignation, of our Lord! He fell on his face, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." And again, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done^a." And when he had drained the bitter draught even to the dregs, and appeared sinking under the sense of his outcast and abandoned condition, with what divine resignation did he breathe forth that dying exclamation, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit^b!"

Whilst thus lowly and obedient to the divine will, he was not deficient in a suitable regard to ordinances of human institution. When some of his enemies endea-

^a Matt. xxvi. 39, 42.

^b Luke xxiii. 46.

voured to ensnare him, by demanding, "whether it was lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar?" He told them, that they should "render unto Cæsar, the things that were Cæsar's^c;" that as they acknowledged Cæsar's authority, they were bound to comply with his lawful demands. When he was required to pay his own tribute-money, he paid it agreeably to this decision^d. When the people, in astonishment at his miracles, would have made him a king, he withdrew himself, and hid himself from them^e: and he repeatedly gave it to be understood that his kingdom was spiritual and not of this world. Nay, during his trial and at his condemnation, a trial conducted with partial iniquity, and a condemnation pronounced by unprincipled cowardice; although he conducted himself indeed with the firmness and dignity of conscious innocence, he replied in deference to the High Priest's adjuration, that he was the Son of God^f; and he submitted himself to those who were invested with legal authority, notwithstand-

^c Matt. xxii. 17. ^d Matt. xvii. 27. ^e John vi. 15.

^f Matt. xxvi. 63.

ing they abused it to the purposes of malignant tyranny.

In his intercourse with his disciples he displayed the same lowliness of character, not only in that he being their "Lord and Master" condescended to wash their feet and to be to them as a servant^s; but by his continual readiness to instruct their ignorance, to relieve their wants, to strengthen their virtue, and to bear with their weaknesses. When he was surrounded by sorrow and affliction; by the suffering of actual misery, and by the anticipation of that more terrible catastrophe, which impended over him; and his three favoured disciples, whom he had selected to "watch and pray" with him, had fallen asleep during his agony; at the same time, that he reproved their unkindness, he pronounced its excuse: "What! could ye not watch with me one hour? watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak^b." When he foresaw that the constancy of Peter would not

^s John xiii. 5.

^b Matt. xxvi. 40.

withstand the trial, to which it was shortly to be exposed; at the same time, that he warned him of its failure, he comforted him with the prospect of its restoration: "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren¹." When he foretold the treachery of Judas, the agitation of his manner signified the anguish of his heart, and his language bore witness that every feeling of anger and resentment was swallowed up in the most tender commiseration for the wretched criminal: "When Jesus had said thus, he was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me: the Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe to that man, by whom the Son of man is betrayed: it had been good for that man, if he had not been born²!" And when his hour was come, and what he had foreseen was brought to pass; and he was betrayed by Judas, and denied by Peter; he witnessed in silence

¹ Luke xxii. 31. ² John xiii. 21. Mark xiv. 21.

the cowardice of the one; and with a question, the most gentle imaginable, re-proved the treachery of the other. "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss¹?" was the expostulation, which he addressed to the traitor. He "turned and looked upon Peter²," who persisted in denying that he knew him.

To his countrymen at large he conducted himself with the same attentive kindness and meekness; striving to instruct and convert them with a patience, which could not be conquered by prejudices the most inveterate, and obstinacy the most perverse. Notwithstanding the insensibility and ingratitude of the Jews, he would not be diverted from the course, in which he had begun;—from healing their infirmities, comforting their afflictions, "going about doing good," and preaching to them the Gospel of peace. So that great as must be our admiration of the goodness, which prompted, and of the power, which performed, his astonish-

¹ Luke xxii. 48.

² Luke xxii. 61.

ing miracles, we must look with equal admiration upon the patience of him, who under circumstances so discouraging could still persevere in performing them. Well indeed had it of old been prophesied of him, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench."ⁿ Nay, when at length he was compelled by the obduracy of the people to pronounce against his country a sentence of condemnation, that sentence was tempered by signs and expressions of the most invincible and the tenderest regard. For "he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes."^o And again; "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chicken under her wings; and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate."^p

ⁿ Isaiah xlii. 3. ^o Luke xix. 42. ^p Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.

His conduct to his most bitter enemies also was marked by the same gentle forbearance; by a meekness of temper, which opposition could not irritate, and which persecution could not subdue. When his enemies charged him with profaning the sabbath, he defended himself with a mild appeal to their reason, asking, “whether it was lawful to do good or to do evil on the sabbath day;” telling them that “the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath;” and bidding them “learn the meaning” of that declaration of God, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.” When they accused him of employing infernal agency, and of “casting out devils by the prince of the devils;” he calmly exposed their malicious and groundless aspersion, by reminding them that “a kingdom, divided against itself, cannot stand; and that if he by Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom was divided against itself, and must therefore fall.” When they upbraided him for “eating with publicans and sinners,” he justified himself by mildly tell-

¹ Mark iii. 4.

² Mark ii. 27.

³ Matt. xii. 7.

⁴ Matt. xii. 25, 26.

ing them, that "they that are whole need not a physician, but they, that are sick;" and that he came "not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." When they charged him with blasphemy, for saying to the sick of the palsy, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" he only demanded of them, "whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?" When they charged him with "deceiving the people," he appealed to his miracles and to the works which he had done among them, as an unanswerable testimony that he came from God. When "they took up stones to cast at him," he met their fury with this placid remonstrance, "Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me?" In this conduct he steadily persevered to the last: and as the malice of his enemies was unconquerable, so was also his gentleness and forbearance. For when in the court of the High Priest, amidst the other insults and dishonours which were heaped upon his

* Matt. ix. 12, 13. * Matt. ix. 5. † John x. 32.

head, "an officer of the high priest" rudely and unjustly "struck him;" his only return was an appeal to the commonest principles of equity: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" And lastly, when he had sustained a trial, excited by malice, supported by falsehood, prosecuted by arbitrary power, and decided by weakness and iniquity; when he had heard his condemnation ratified by a judge who had previously pronounced his innocence; and when he was now enduring a painful and a lingering death, the miseries of which were aggravated by every circumstance of ignominy, derision, and despite; the only return which he made to the malice of his murderers, was an excuse for their guilt and a prayer for their forgiveness: "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do!"

So true was the prediction of the Prophet, that "he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her

² John xviii. 23.

³ Luke xxiii. 34.

shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth^b:" and so true was the declaration of the Apostle, that "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously^c:" as were also those declarations of the other Apostle, that "he endured the cross, despising the shame;" and that he not only "was made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" but that "he humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form," and displayed the lowliness of mind, of the meanest among the sons of men.

I know not how I can conclude better, than by earnestly calling your attention to two remarks, suggested by the foregoing considerations. In the first place then, we are bound by the most solemn ties of gratitude and affection, to love, honour, and obey our blessed Saviour, in every

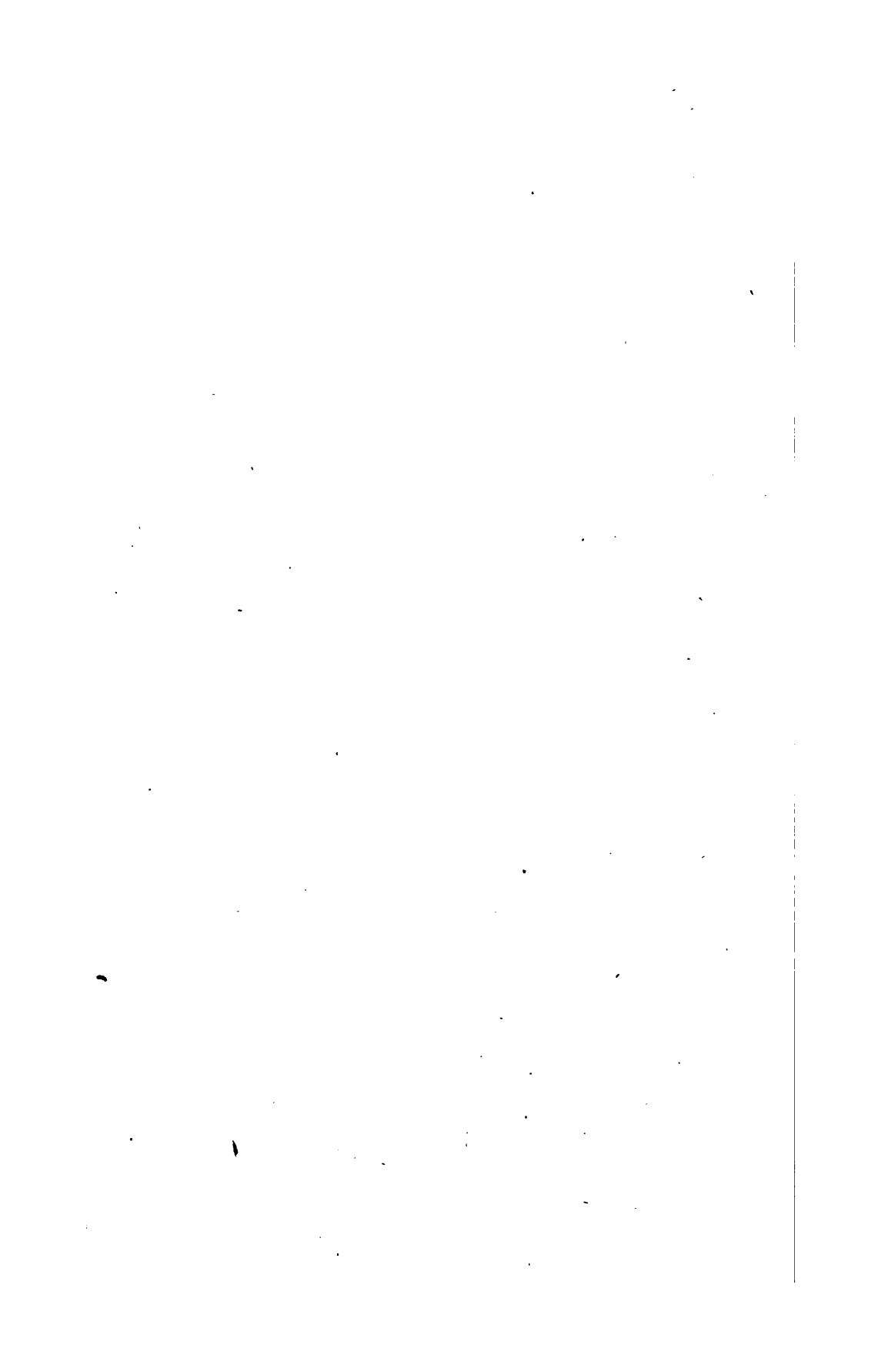
^b Isaiah liii. 7.

^c 1 Pet. ii. 23.

possible way, especially in every way of his own appointment,—who could thus for our sakes exchange “the form of God” for “the form of a servant;” and who for our sakes could thus suffer and thus endure. And in the second place we are bound to manifest our gratitude by “following his steps,” and by striving to imitate his resigned piety to God; his dutiful obedience to his lawful governors; his general regard for his country; his tender affection for his friends; and his forbearance towards his enemies. “If therefore,” in the language of the Apostle, “if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; let this mind be in us,” both towards God and towards our neighbour, “which was also in Christ Jesus^d :” remembering always, that as he “suffered for us,” so also “he has left us an example that we should follow his steps^e ;” and that it is only “by following the example of his patience and great humility,” that we can become meet to be “made partakers of his resurrection.”

^d Phil. ii. 1, 5.

^e 1 Pet. ii. 21.



SERMON IX.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED A MOTIVE TO HOLINESS, AND
A PATTERN FOR IMITATION.

HEB. xii. 1, 2.

*Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with
so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside
every weight, and the sin which doth so easily
beset us, and let us run with patience the race
that is set before us,*

*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of
our faith; who for the joy that was set before
him, endured the cross, despising the shame;
and is set down at the right hand of the throne
of God.*

ST. Luke, who recounts the whole of our Saviour's history at length, calls the passion in plain and express terms a sight or a spectacle: "all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and

returned^a.” It is this sight, which the Apostle in the text calls us to “look unto.”

Of our Saviour’s life there is no part, which does not deserve our very attentive contemplation; for there is no part, which is not calculated to improve us in holiness and virtue. But of the whole his passion is that part, which ought more especially to fix our attention. He is to be “looked unto” at all times and in all acts; but then more especially, and in that act, when “for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame.” Then saith the Apostle, “look unto him.” And in another place, being desirous to show the Corinthians, what it most concerned them to know, namely Jesus Christ; and in Christ, what they were more especially interested in considering; he declares, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified^b ;”—meaning hereby, that the perfection of all knowledge is Christ; and the perfection of our

^a Luke xxiii. 48.

^b 1 Cor. ii. 11.

knowledge relating to Christ is the knowledge of his Cross and Passion.

The best guide to the understanding of what is said is the occasion on which it is spoken. Now the occasion of the text was this. St. Paul wished to encourage the Hebrew converts and in them all future Christians, to “hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering^c.” This profession he expresses in the former verse of the text under the terms of a “race,” or a game; borrowing his similitude from the Olympic Games, which were at that time periodically celebrated in Greece, and renowned throughout the world; and by expressions derived from which, it was the practice with all writers of the age, both sacred and profane, to represent as in the running, the laborious course; so in the prize of it, the glorious recompense of a virtuous life.

That we may “run the race” with the greater vigour, and be more secure of attaining the prize, he sets before us two

^c Heb. x. 23.

sights to strengthen and comfort us, and keep us from being "weary and fainting in our minds." The former is "a cloud of witnesses," mentioned in the first verse, by which he means the departed Saints:—witnesses, who are able to depose, that the race may be run, and the prize may be attained; for they have run the one, and have attained the other:—witnesses, who look on to see with what alacrity we exert ourselves, and to whom we may look for encouragement to exert ourselves well, in the course which we have undertaken.

On which assembly when we have fixed our eyes awhile, and fitted them to behold a still brighter object, he sets before us another, even our blessed Saviour; calling on us to withdraw our eyes from those less illustrious persons, by whom "we are compassed about;" and to fix them upon "Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith." As if he should say, If you would at once behold a sight, which may at all times command, and fix, and occupy, your attention, look unto Him. The Saints, though they be guides to us, are still no

more than followers of Him. He is their leader, their guide, as well as ours. They are well-wishers to our faith; but are neither the authors nor the finishers of it. He is both; both "author," to call and to introduce us to it; and "finisher," to lead it to its consummation, and to crown it with its recompense. Look unto him therefore is the Apostle's warning; and it is the warning of this "cloud of witnesses" also, of those blessed spirits, who having already attained to his rest, are anxious that we should not fall short of it. Sometimes indeed it may be said, as indeed it hath been said by the Apostle St. James, "Take, my brethren, the prophets for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience^d." Sometimes the conduct of an inferior being will serve to guide us in our course. But after all, the surest and most perfect model is that divine Person, "who suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." And when he himself declares, "I have given you an example^e," and commands us to follow it

^d James v. 10.

^e John xiii. 15.

by his authority as our "Lord and Master," then "let all flesh keep silence." Let all the Saints fall prostrate before him; yea, let the Seraphim themselves cover their faces with their wings, that our eyes may not be drawn aside by other sights, but that we may look steadily unto Him.

This is the object to which our eyes have been directed during our late meditations. But now once again, let us apply the advice of the Apostle; that we may proceed, from a contemplation of this awful sight, to consider with more awakened minds the effect, which our Saviour's passion should have upon our conduct.

Look unto Him then, and you will see the everlasting Son of the everlasting Father; "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," divesting himself of his equality with God, and appearing upon earth in the likeness of men.

Look unto Him, and you will behold him exposed to all the infirmities which

befal the meanest and most despised among the sons of men: submitting to poverty, want, and weakness; to contempt and derision; to oppression and persecution; from the moment of his birth in a stable to that when he expired upon the cross.

Look unto Him, at that season in particular which preceded and terminated in his death, and you will see almost all the miseries which human nature can feel, heaped together upon his head: for “never was sorrow like to that sorrow wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger;” whether in the exquisite pains and tortures which were inflicted upon his body, or in the unknown fears and anguish, which agitated and depressed his soul.

Look unto Him; and amidst these unexampled sufferings, you will nevertheless behold him “enduring the cross, despising the shame:”—amidst the exceeding great sorrow which weighed down his soul, yielding himself with devout resignation

to his Father's will:—amidst the agony of his torments, and under the most painful sense of his forsaken condition, still “holding fast by God,” and “commending his Spirit” to his almighty protection:—and amidst the storm of malice which was showered upon him, still pleading the cause and imploring the forgiveness of his murderers.

Look unto Him; and at the same time call to mind, that the motive of this amazing humiliation was love, free love for us; that the cause for which he suffered, was not in himself, but in us; that to save us from the terrible wages of sin; to reinstate us in the favour of God; to deliver us from the wrath to come, and to purchase eternal redemption for us, and as the consequence of redemption from sin, eternal happiness in heaven:—such were the reasons, for which our blessed Lord submitted to his great and unexampled sufferings. “He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us;” he humbled himself, to suffer that punishment which nothing but sin could deserve, that “we might be made the

righteousness of God in him." When we were exposed to eternal misery, he shed his precious blood as the price of our redemption, and became the atonement and "propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." When we lay under the sentence of everlasting death, he placed himself as it were in our stead, and "tasted death for every man," that we might have life through his blood. When we were aliens and enemies to God, he made reconciliation for us, and established a new covenant between God and us; by which God hath graciously promised for the sake of the meritorious sacrifice of his Son, to forgive the sins of all those who repent and believe the Gospel, and to make them partakers of everlasting life and inheritors of his glory.

Thus looking unto Jesus, who "endured the cross, despising the shame;" and thus regarding him as "the author and finisher of our faith," as justifying those who believe in Him now, and as promising to glorify them hereafter; what more animating motive can we require to "lay aside

every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race which is set before us?"

And first with respect to our sins, however closely they may beset us; however dear they may be to us;—though they may be incorporated, as it were, into our substance, and made a part of ourselves, beloved and cherished as “a right hand or a right eye;”—the prospect of our blessed Saviour, bleeding upon the cross, and the reflection upon the cause for which he bled, should make us loath and detest them. If we have any sympathy with him in his sufferings, if we feel any share, however small, of the affliction which he endured, and of the contempt and malice which assailed him; that feeling must undoubtedly be mingled with indignation towards his persecutors. Do we then feel displeasure and abhorrence towards those instruments, by which our blessed Lord was exposed to such misery and torment? Do we abhor Judas, who betrayed him; the Jewish priests, who accused; Pilate, who condemned; the multitude, who

mocked and reviled him? Do we detest their deeds, and execrate their memories? And shall we not at the same time detest and execrate our own sins, which were the real primary cause of that torture and disgrace? He was delivered for our offences:—He that knew no sin was made sin for us:—our iniquities betrayed, accused, and condemned him:—our iniquities raised those hands, that smote him; hardened those hearts, that scorned him; and sharpened those tongues, that reviled him, and that spear, by which he was pierced. “He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.” And can we do otherwise than detest our transgressions? Can we do otherwise than abhor our iniquities? Shall we not turn again, and repent, and be converted?

“Or if indignation against the causes of our Saviour’s sufferings will not work upon us to the hatred and forsaking of sin; can we behold the spectacle of Christ hanging upon the cross, and reflect that it was out of pure love to us, that he so suffered, and not feel our hearts warmed with senti-

ments of gratitude and love? But to persevere in sin and disobedience is to slight and despise and reject our blessed Lord, who suffered and died that he might destroy sin. And can we be content to disregard the love, and to slight the kindness, of Christ? Can we be content to despise and reject Him, who laid down his life, and suffered the greatest misery for our sakes? Can we, after having been thus kindly and affectionately treated by him, make him a return by "crucifying to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame?" which we always do, when we who call ourselves Christians bring by our wickedness discredit upon the religion which we profess. Can we without horror "tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing?" which we do, when we habitually refuse to renew our covenant with God, and to partake in the blood of Christ, administered at the holy communion? Nay, rather, shall we not take that, and every other method, of

^f Heb. vi. 6.

^g Heb. x. 29.

“letting our light shine before men;”—of showing our obedience, and therein our affection and gratitude for Him, who for our sakes “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;”—who for our sakes “endured the cross, despising the shame?”

Or if such considerations as these will not melt us into sorrow for our sins, and induce us to repent and forsake them; surely when we look unto Jesus Christ, that Lamb of God, offering himself to the Father without spot for our redemption, we must tremble to think upon the heinousness of our guilt; and upon the anger and impartial justice of God manifested in the crucifixion;—anger so severe, and justice so inflexible and impartial, that the death of the Son of God alone was sufficient to appease and propitiate them. If the dread of earthly laws prevent us from doing evil to men; if the execution of those laws in the death of an ordinary criminal strike us with fear and reverence; if the very pomp and ceremony, which precede or accompany such an execution

cannot be beheld even by the innocent without certain awful and gloomy sensations; what should be our horror and dismay at this unparalleled monument of divine vengeance? with what alarming feelings and forebodings should not the sinner contemplate this singular instance of God's justice and abomination of sin?—At the sacrifice of this victim, this spotless offering for our sins, nature itself was agitated and disturbed. There was darkness over the whole land. The sun was darkened; and the veil of the temple was rent in twain; and the earth did quake; and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies which slept arose. And can we think upon these stupendous miracles, without thinking upon the power, which produced them; and upon the justice, which rendered necessary the sacrifice and death of Him, in evidence of whom they were produced? Whilst all nature is in confusion, and “the very foundations of the earth are out of course,” shall man alone be an unconcerned spectator of the scene, thoughtless and careless whether he arouse that justice and power against himself?

Whilst the very bodies of the saints are called from their houses of corruption to testify to the Lord of life, shall the soul of the sinner alone pass by the way, or carelessly look on, as if it were nothing to him? These inanimate objects indeed have neither speech nor language for the fleshly ear; but to the ear of faith, the darkened sun and the quaking earth, the rending rocks and the opening graves, announce the wages of sin; yea, the very blood of Christ, like "the blood of Abel, crieth" aloud "from the ground^b," and bids the listening sinner, as Christ himself bade the daughters of Jerusalem, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your childrenⁱ;" for "behold, the days are coming, in which they shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and shall say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him, that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand^k?"

^b Gen. iv. 10.
16, 17.

ⁱ Luke xxiii. 28.

^k Rev. vi. 15,

Such motives for forsaking our sins arise from the spectacle of Christ crucified: and to those who do forsake them, his blood through faith in his blood will be effectual for their propitiation. “He gave himself a ransom for all¹;” as St. Paul saith. Then again as St. Peter tells us, “he suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps^m.” And to this also the Apostle directs our thoughts in the text, where he admonishes us, to “run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;” and to the same effect in the following verse, “consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

Let us then, secondly, look unto Him as the perfect model for our lives. For indeed, as the Church under the law needed not, so neither doth the Church under the Gospel need, any other precept than that which was given to Moses for the offering

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 6.

^m 1 Pet. ii. 21.

of the tabernacle; “ look that thou do after the pattern, which was showed thee in the mount ^a;” such a pattern was showed to the Jews in Mount Sinai, where Moses was instructed in the rites of the old covenant; and such an one is showed to us Christians, in Mount Calvary, where Christ set his seal to the new.

Were all human wisdom and philosophy lost, whatever is really valuable in them might be found there: were every teacher of virtue silent, even Moses himself as well as others, Christ alone would suffice to teach every virtue requisite for man. He teaches them to us not only by his precepts; but knowing that instruction is conveyed in a more lively and impressive manner by the eye than by the ear, he teaches us also by his example: and more especially in this spectacle, which we are now contemplating upon the cross, we may behold every virtue embodied as it were in his person, and visibly exhibited before us.

^a Heb. viii. 5.

Look unto Him; and there you will behold Faith, still clinging to God, notwithstanding his apparent desertion, and addressing him by an appellation nevertheless denoting confidence, "My God, my God." You will behold Patience, "enduring the cross;" Humility, "despising the shame;" and Perseverance, not only beginning, but "finishing our faith," the work of our salvation. Above all you will behold unexampled Love, the main spring and principle, the crown and consummation of all. "Behold what manner of love he hath here bestowed on us!" "Greater love than this hath no man,"^p that a man lay down his life in any way: equal love hath no man to this, that a man lay down his life in the midst of such torment and disgrace:—"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends:" equal love hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his enemies:—look unto it and consider it; examine it in all its parts; survey it in all its bearings; measure it in its "breadth and length

^o 1 John iii. 1.

^p John xv. 13.

and depth and height^a;" that so ye may be able to "comprehend" it as far as is possible, and "to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge^r."

But wherefore, and to what purpose are our eyes directed to this pattern of excellence, if it be not that we may adopt it for our imitation? that we may be taught by it, not to be "wearied and faint in our minds;" but that we may "run the race that is set before us," supported by those virtues, which distinguished our Saviour's passion:—by Faith, who "knoweth whom she hath believed, and is persuaded that He is able to keep that which she hath committed unto him against that day^s;"—by Patience, who "counts it all joy to fall into divers temptations^t," and "reckons that the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory, that shall be revealed in us^u:"—by Humility, that "doeth nothing through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind esteem-

^a Eph. iii. 18.

^r Eph. iii. 19.

^s 2 Tim. i. 12.

^t James i. 2.

^u Rom. viii. 18.

eth others better than herself^x ;”—by Perseverance, that is “not weary in well-doing^y ;” and above all by Love, unbounded, unfailing, universal Love ;—Love for “God who was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself^z ;” and Love for our brethren, yea for the whole race of mankind ; partakers with us of one sinful nature, and inheritors of the same redemption.

Thus “laying aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us,” and thus “running the race which is set before us,” with faith, with patience, with humility, with perseverance, and with love ; let us “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus^a .” For the cross of Christ is not that which terminates the prospect ; the pains that he endured, the shame that he despised, are not the whole of the sight, which is presented to our eyes. Let us look unto Him once more ; and our eyes will be capti-

^x Phil. ii. 3.

^y Gal. vi. 9.

^z 2 Cor. v. 19.

^a Phil. iii. 14.

vated with a very different object, while beyond the cross they catch a glimpse of that state of exaltation where "he now sitteth at the right hand of the throne of God." His heaviness is now turned into joy; his pain into rest; his shame into glory. He, to whom the multitude preferred a thief and murderer, is now "raised far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come ^b." He, for whom Pilate could discover no fitter appellation than "Behold the man!" is now worshipped by the spirits of just men made perfect as their Lord and their God. He, whose superscription the Jewish priests condemned, and denied his right to the title of "King of the Jews," hath now "upon his vesture and upon his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords ^c." He, who was "despised and rejected of men," and became "obedient to the death of the cross," is now exalted to "the right hand of power ^d," and sitteth upon the throne of God.

^b Eph. i. 21. ^c Rev. xix. 16. ^d Mark xiv. 62.

There he sitteth ; and as from the cross of his shame, so also from “ the throne of his glory,” he calleth us to look unto Him. On the former he appears as “ the author,” on the latter as “ the finisher” of our faith : on the former he sets us an example that we should “ follow his steps ;” and from the latter he represents himself as “ the exceeding great reward” of those who shall follow him ; whilst to him that overcometh he promises that he will give a crown of life, that he will receive him into the fulness of his joy, and that he will grant him to sit with him in his throne, even as he also overcame, and is made partaker of the throne of his Father^e.

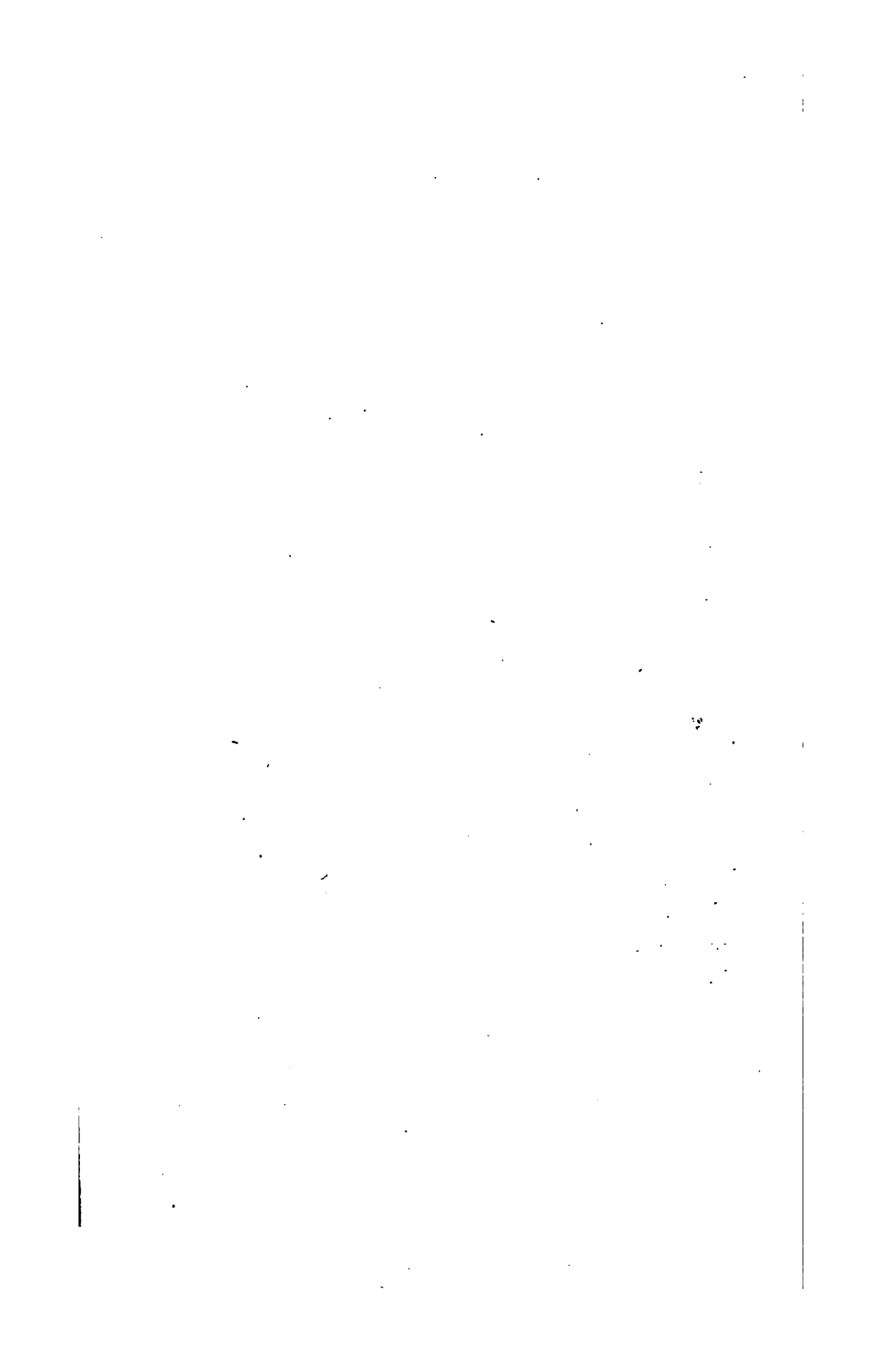
And what more can we need to make us persevere in the course of Christian holiness ? Are we sensible to the feelings of gratitude ? Behold the love of Christ, in laying down his life for our sakes !—Are we indignant at the sight of suffering innocence ? He died for our sins.—Are we capable of fear ? “ Knowing the terrors of the Lord,” and the punishment he de-

^e Rev. ii. 7. iii. 21.

nounces against the wicked, “ we persuade men.”—Are we alive to a noble emulation? The example of Christ is before us, which we cannot reach indeed, but to which we may continually draw nearer.—Are we to be animated by hope? “ Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

May it please our almighty and most merciful Father, who supplies us with such powerful motives for exertion, to give us grace to act as they impel us! May it please him to give such efficacy to these our contemplations on the death of Christ, that we may be inspired with godly fortitude to renounce our sins and to follow his holy steps! that when it shall be his good will to remove us hence we may depart in peace; and that “ when Christ who is our life shall appear, then we may also appear with him in glory!”

† Col. iii. 4.



SERMON X.

INSUFFICIENCY OF WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS TO
PURCHASE SALVATION.

Acts iv. 11, 12.

This is the stone, which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

IT is not an uncommon practice with the sacred writers, to speak of the scheme of God's bountiful revelation to mankind under the image of a building; of which Christ is represented as the foundation and chief corner stone. It is in this manner, that the evangelical prophet Isaiah fore-

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tels the will of the Almighty; " Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation^a." It is in this manner that the holy Psalmist, foretelling at the same time both the salvation to be wrought by Christ, and also his rejection by the Jews, pronounces, " The stone, which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner^b." It is in this manner that the blessed apostles and evangelists apply the predictions of the Jewish scripture in the same figurative language to the person of Christ; and especially St. Paul dwells in a sublime passage upon the idea; and enlarges upon the foundation, the superstructure, and the completion of the fabric, when he congratulates his Ephesian converts, that " now they are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the

^a Is. xxviii. 16.

^b Ps. cxviii. 22.

building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

Of this well-compacted edifice, whose beginning is in the mercy of God, and whose end is God's glory and the salvation of men, you perceive that Christ is uniformly represented as the main and essential support; as indispensable for its security; as necessary to its existence. And you may perceive from other scriptures, that this honour is the peculiar property of Christ; it is one, which belongs to him, and to him alone; it is one, which cannot be taken from him, and given to another. The foundation cannot be shifted; the corner stone cannot be exchanged. "Other foundation," saith St. Paul to his converts from heathenism at Corinth, "can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "This is the stone," saith St. Peter in my text to the Jews at Jerusalem, "which was set at nought of you

* Eph. ii. 19—22. . . . † 1 Cor. iii. 11.

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builders, which is become the head of the corner: neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The claim, you see, is absolute and incommunicable. Christ is as jealous of his title and honour, as the Lord God of the Hebrews was of his. "There is one God, and there is also one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." He is the Saviour, and none but he: "He saveth his people from their sins;" and none, but he, will or can do it.

But who are they, that will be saved by Christ? Will all men be saved by him? Will his blood be effectual for the salvation of all men?—Would God, that we could believe or hope it! His name indeed is given among men that they might be saved; his name (we doubt not) is sufficient for all men; but to those alone it will be ultimately effectual, who place their sure trust and confidence in his

name, and who seek and cling unto him by faith;—by “faith, which,” as St. Paul says, “worketh by love^f ;”—faith, which, in the language of St. James, “is made perfect by works^g ;”—faith, which, as St. Peter implies, is ratified by obedience. “Unto you which believe,” saith the last Apostle in his Catholic Epistle, still keeping sight of the figure, before alluded to, “Unto you which believe, is Jesus Christ precious; but unto them, which are disobedient, the stone, which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient^h .”

Now these words of St. Peter, compared with those of the same Apostle in my text, point out to us the principal cause of the ruin of such, as are lost notwithstanding Christ be preached to them. They would gladly perhaps accept salvation, if they could be admitted to it in their own way: but almighty God, at the same time that

^f Gal. v. 6.

^g James ii. 22.

^h 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

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he tenders salvation to men, chooses that it should be received by one specific method. He offers salvation through faith in Christ Jesus: "neither is there salvation in any other;" for he declares that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Many, who would accept the offer, will not close with the terms. Instead of trusting for their salvation to the righteousness of Christ, they "go about to establish their own righteousness¹." Instead of "growing unto an holy temple in the Lord," through faith in the merits of Him, who is the chief corner stone, they endeavour to establish their salvation on the imaginary groundwork of their own merits. So it was in the first times of the Gospel: it was in vain that the apostles of our Lord impressed on their hearers the great, the essential principle of the Christian faith, salvation by Christ alone. Did they tell the Gentiles, that "other foundation could no man lay, than that they laid, which is Jesus Christ²?" "Spoiled through philo-

¹ Rom. x. 3.

² Rom. iii. 11.

sophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world," the doctrine of salvation through faith in a crucified Redeemer was unto the heathens "foolishness." Did they warn the Jews, that "there was none other name under heaven given unto men whereby they must be saved," but only the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Vain of their peculiar privileges, and fancying that they should be justified by their adherence, however imperfect, to the law of Moses, the doctrine of salvation through that man, whom they had crucified, was "a stumbling block unto the Jews." Nay, when they had so far overcome their prejudices, as to profess their belief in Christ, and to become disciples of the Gospel, still there were many among them, who could hardly be persuaded to throw themselves on the meritorious sacrifice of the only Saviour, and to renounce the observance of their own legal rites and ceremonies, as contributing in part to their salvation. And it was a doctrine which their hardness of heart rendered necessary to be perpetually inculcated upon them, that

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if they resorted for justification to an observance of the law, "Christ profited them nothing; Christ was become of no effect unto them;—that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availed any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith, which worketh by love¹."

These were the errors, with which the apostles had to contend, when they first preached Christianity: and the origin of the errors was this, that the men, to whom it was preached, did not submit their wills absolutely to the will of God; did not cheerfully embrace "the riches of his grace" in the way, in which he would bestow it; that they endeavoured to "lay another foundation," than that which he by his apostles laid; that they sought salvation in some other name, than in his, "who is alone the head of the corner." The consequence was, that notwithstanding salvation was offered unto all men, some were saved, and others perished; that whilst to some it was "the savour of life

¹Gal. v. 2, 4, 6.

unto life," to others it was "the savour of death unto death ^m."

Are these remarks introduced as matter for mere idle speculation? Are they applicable only to the early ages of the Gospel? Are the errors, to which they direct our thoughts, no longer in existence? Have these errors vanished before the superior degree of illumination, to which pretension is made in this, which we vauntingly esteem an enlightened age? Do we, for instance, who are here assembled;—do we amid all the brightness of superior knowledge which encompasses us, cherish the glorious light of the Gospel, the day-spring from on high, the revelation of God's love and free grace in Christ, as the best and most inestimable of all the "good and perfect gifts," which "come down from the Father of lights?" Do we know and feel, that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? Or do we go about to establish

^m 2 Cor, ii. 16.

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our own righteousness, resting our hopes on the one hand, like the Jews, upon our own obedience to the law of God, instead of relying on the all-sufficient merits and the perfect obedience of Christ; or like the Gentiles on the other hand, substituting a vague and heartless morality for the glowing faith, the unfailing charity, and the undefiled holiness of the Gospel?

Each of these errors is of very dangerous consequence, inconsistent as it is with the fundamental truth of Christianity, that there is no other name whereby we must be saved, but only the name of Jesus Christ. Each of them therefore requires to be separately considered: and the more so, as they relate to the condition of a large portion of mankind; the former being entertained by those, who, with a general belief in the Christian religion, have yet a very inadequate conception of the value of Christ's sacrifice; and the latter being held by those, who esteem what they denominate natural religion sufficient for their salvation, without the sacrifice of Christ.

And first, with respect to those, who think they can purchase salvation by a *meritorious* obedience to the revealed will of God.

Now the obedience of such persons must be either perfect or imperfect. Is it, can it be, perfect? Ask your own consciences, and let them sincerely answer the question, whether your thoughts, words, and deeds are in all things regulated by the rule of God's commandments;—whether you have not “followed too much the devices and desires of your own hearts;”—whether you have not “offended against God's holy laws;”—whether you have not “left undone those things which you ought to have done, and done those things which you ought not to have done?” Let them confirm the confession of St. James, “In many things we offend all.” Let them bear witness to the truth of St. John's declaration, “If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

* James iii. 2.

† 1 John i. 8.

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Our obedience then is imperfect : in other words, although in some respects we may obey the commandments of God, in others we unquestionably disobey them. Now where we obey them, it is so far well, that we are in those particulars doing our duty ; but still even in those, it is no more than our duty that we do. Nor can the performance of our duty in one case make amends for our neglect, or violation, of it in another. Our Saviour illustrates this point by a familiar instance drawn from domestic life, and expressly asserts the doctrine, for which I am contending. “ Which of you,” he demands, “ having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat ? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink ? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him ? I trow not. So likewise ye,” adds our blessed Lord, making the application of the

case to us who are the servants of God, "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do^p."

But whilst a partial obedience cannot make us meritorious in the eyes of God, a partial disobedience must expose us to his displeasure. Imposed upon us by the same authority, all his commandments are equally binding. The authority then is slighted, the tie of duty is broken, the principle of allegiance is violated, whenever and in whatever degree those commandments, even the least of them, are disobeyed. And it is in inspired language that we affirm, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all^q."

We perceive therefore how frail is the foundation on which we build, if we expect to merit God's favour and our future salvation by obedience to his command-

^p Luke xvii. 7—10.

^q James ii. 10.

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ments. We shall hardly dare to aver that our obedience to them is perfect: and if it be once allowed to fall short of perfection, it cannot be in ourselves to offer any atonement and compensation for its failures. If indeed it were in our power to make such an atonement, we should not stand in need of the propitiation made by the sacrifice of Christ: the Apostle's language is of force when applied to the Christian, who trusts to his own obedience as the price of his salvation, as it was to the Jew, who relied on his performance of the Mosaic law: "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." That atonement then not being in ourselves, we must have recourse to some other propitiation; even to Him, who "died for our sins and rose again for our justification".

Do I mean to speak contemptuously or slightingly of obedience to the commandments of God? God forbid! Such obedience I understand to be, generally speaking, indispensably necessary to salvation:

¹ Gal. ii. 21.

² Rom. iv. 25.

—the surest evidence, the constant accompaniment, the fairest ornament, the only infallible criterion, the very crown and perfection, of a true Christian faith. It is that without which faith is “nothing,” and “is dead.” But my meaning is to set obedience upon its true scriptural ground; to exclude it from every pretension to be considered as meriting our salvation: to protest most decidedly against the notion, that any thing or every thing, which we can do, is to be considered in the light of an atonement for what we do not do: and to assert most unequivocally the doctrine, that after all the exertions of a Christian, he must throw himself unreservedly for salvation upon the meritorious sacrifice of Christ; for that there is “no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”

It is usual with persons of a certain description, who appear to entertain very inadequate conceptions of the Christian revelation, to represent it as especially va-

* 1 Cor. xiii. 2. James ii. 17, 20, 26.

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luable in the light of a code of morals. A code of morals indeed it is; purer, than was ever conceived by the corrupt heart of man; and more perfect, than was ever framed by the masters of human wisdom. But this is not its distinguishing, this is not its characteristic praise; this is not the praise, which it claims exclusively to itself, and which it allows not to be shared with other teachers of mankind. Its glory, its peculiar and incommunicable glory is, that it reveals the plan of salvation to the fallen posterity of Adam, by the free and undeserved grace of God, and through a lively operative faith in the blood of a crucified Saviour. And he who recommends, or he who adopts the Gospel, merely as a code of morals, distinct from and independent of faith in Christ, is, as to all the main purposes of that revelation, attempting to raise the superstructure, whilst he "rejects the head-stone of the corner."

II. But if even obedience to the revealed will and known word of God is not sufficient to purchase for us the divine favour; and the blood of Christ is necessary

to make atonement even for those, who believe in, and study to serve him; what shall we say of that vague, that questionable, and frigid morality, which the modern philosopher teaches, and the man of the world practises, as a substitute for the glowing faith, the unfailing charity, and the spotless holiness required of the Christian; a morality, unsound and defective in its principles, uncertain in its production of good; and often permitting and sanctioning evil?

As to the principles of this worldly, this philosophical morality; what are they? Is it founded on a devout love and fear and reverence of God; on a lowly admiration of his perfections, and a very earnest desire and longing to be approved before him? The mere moral man would esteem it an insult to be thought capable of such a principle of action. Is it founded on a stedfast principle of benevolence to mankind? The philosopher will boast that it is so; he has boasted it; we have seen, we have heard him boast it; we have heard him ostentatiously vaunting his enlarged

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philanthropy, his boundless affection for human kind; whilst he has been striving to blast all their enjoyments in this world, by crushing their hopes of comfort in another.

But what is the principle of the mere moral man? Is it the fear of worldly shame or punishment; or the desire of worldly honour, or reward? Is it custom? Is it expedience? Is it an innate sense of what is right; and an innate love of virtue, and hatred of vice in the abstract, animating him to the practice of rectitude? Whatever it be, it is unsound and defective; and can never be put in competition with the love of God, founded on a reverential sense of the divine perfections, and exerting itself in beneficence to man.

For look to its effects; and you will see that it is limited in its operation of good; it is liable to innumerable fluctuations according to the circumstances under which it acts; and it allows and encourages, nay it enjoins, various actions of a character decidedly evil. I do not dispute, but that

a general decency and outward propriety of conduct may be maintained, or that specious and splendid, nay that in a certain sense great and noble, actions may be performed, upon worldly principles: but I do indeed call in question the value of such principles, in cases of extraordinary trial; where general opinion militates against our sense of rectitude; where what is profitable or agreeable clashes with what we esteem our duty; or where our passions are up in arms against us, or lie in wait to seduce and deceive. A fear of the censure, and a thirst for the applause of the world—motives like these for instance—may cooperate with a man's natural endowments, and enable him to support his part, generally without any glaring impropriety, and even with much of what the world calls dignity, on the great theatre of life. But is he possessed of that, which will invigorate him in scenes of a less ostentatious kind, and amid more arduous and seducing trials? Will his principles animate him to the practice of the retired and private virtues, as well as of those, which thrive in the sunshine of po-

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ularity? Will his principles prompt him to submit with pious resignation to the chastening hand of Providence, and to kiss the rod which smites him? Will they prompt him to bear unmerited persecution with a spirit, which triumphs in forgiveness? Will they prompt him to "visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world?" Captivated as he pretends to be with the loveliness of abstract virtue, and alive to the moral fitness of things, and to the dictates of the moral sense, will his principles restrain him from tyrannizing over them that have none to help them; from staking the welfare of his family on the hazard of a die; from defiling the bed of his neighbour; from exposing the chastity of his wife to ruin by criminal neglect, or no less criminal indulgence; or from arming his hand against his friend? Look abroad into the world, and observe the morality of many of those, who would not only themselves resent any imputation upon their characters; but whom the world is content to esteem, as persons of general respectability. Turn to the trea-

tises of some of our modern philosophers ; and see the morality which they patronize and commend. It was the detestable attempt of a late countryman of our own, who was accounted by many the first philosopher of his age, and whose writings are still perpetually cited with admiration ;— in a work designed to settle the principles of morals on their proper foundation—it was his nefarious attempt, to establish principles which would destroy the morality of all human actions ; to justify suicide by arguments, which are as conclusive in favour of murder ; and to palliate adultery by representing it, as a sacrifice of useful to agreeable qualities, of the domestic to the sociable pleasures.

And shall we, like the poor prodigal, flee from our father's house, " where there is bread enough, and to spare," and feed on such " husks" as these ? Shall we forsake " the living fountains" of salvation, and drink from such cisterns, such " broken cisterns," as these ? Surely if a sincere but imperfect obedience to the moral precepts of the Gospel cannot put away our sins,

and endure “the severity of God’s judgment;” much less is it the morality of the world, which can reconcile us to a holy and a righteous God. If the blood of Christ be necessary to wash away the sins even of his faithful followers, much more must it be wanted to purify the pollution contracted by such philosophy as this.

Renouncing then on the one hand the Jewish notion of meriting salvation by our obedience to the law; and watching over ourselves on the other, lest, like the Heathens, we be spoiled by false philosophy and vain deceit, by the traditions of men, by the rudiments of this world; let us steadfastly adhere to the true evangelical doctrine of salvation through the alone merits of the Redeemer. To place our reliance on any thing else is to build upon the sand: but Christ is the “chief corner stone, elect, precious;” and although the self-righteous may slight, or the infidel may reject him, yet whosoever “believeth on him, shall not be confounded.”

“ 1 Pet. ii. 6.

SERMON XI.

OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST NECESSARY TO THE SALVATION OF CHRISTIANS.

MATT. vii. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

OF the persons, who call themselves Christians, and profess to be the disciples of Christ, there are two sorts: those who call Christ their "Lord," and do no more: and those, who both call him Lord, and "do the will of his Father," the administration of which is committed to him. With respect to the former of these, name-

ly such as to a profession of allegiance to Christ, unite no works of obedience; however favourably they may think of their own state, our Saviour in this passage expressly excludeth them from "the kingdom of heaven." With respect to the other description, namely that of those, who not only call Christ their Lord, but do the will of his Father, they are the only true Christians; and of them it is as expressly said by our Saviour, that they "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The text consists of two parts: the former is negative; "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven:" the other affirmative; "but they who do the will of my heavenly Father," shall enter therein. But the two parts are so intimately connected, that they cannot well be considered separately: they shall therefore serve together for the ground of the observations, which I propose with God's blessing to draw from them. And first, I shall endeavour to show, that obedience to Christ is necessary to

the salvation of those, who profess themselves to be his disciples: secondly, I shall proceed to remark, that in obedience to Christ is comprised, not only abstinence from evil, but activity in doing good: and I shall then conclude with setting before you, in what manner those good works, which are necessary to our salvation, are to be performed. May it please almighty God to give us the preventing and assisting grace of his Holy Spirit; and prosper our meditations to the honour of the Gospel of his Son!

I. In discussing the first of these observations, namely, that obedience to Christ is necessary to the salvation of those who call themselves Christians, let us begin with considering, that this is the very end of our faith and justification by Christ; yea, the very end, on account of which he shed his blood for us—that we, being reconciled to God by him, might bring forth fruits of righteousness, which otherwise we could not have produced. This is no speculation; but plain scripture: no human conceit; but the revealed truth of the

Holy Ghost. St. Peter tells us, that “ Christ his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness^a.” St. Paul assures us, “ The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men :”—wherefore?—“ teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works^b.” These words are an unanswerable testimony to the truth of the assertion, that Christ is given to be a propitiation for our sins and the price of our justification, for this very end, that we might walk before God in newness of life, in a holy and righteous obedience to his commandments.

To the same effect is that passage to the Ephesians, where the Apostle having

^a 1 Pet. ii. 24.

^b Tit. ii. 12, 13, 14.

affirmed, We are saved by grace, through faith, and not of works, lest any man should boast;" he immediately adds, (lest his meaning should be mistaken, as unhappily it too often is,) " For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them:" as if he should say, Those works of obedience, formerly ordained by God in his law for us to walk in, but which of ourselves we could not perform—now hath God new created us, as it were, in Jesus Christ, that we might perform them in him, and so be finally accepted for his sake, though our obedience come short of that perfect obedience, which the law requires. And thus to be saved is to be saved by grace and favour, and not by the merit of works; because the foundation, on which is built the acceptance of ourselves and of our services in the sight of God, is the mere favour of God in Jesus Christ, and not any thing in us. And this method of salvation excludes all boasting; for what

have we to boast of, when all the righteousness of our works is not derived from ourselves, but is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us; whereby alone, and not for any merit in themselves, they become acceptable, and receive the promise of a reward? But that men should be saved by Christ, though they are idle and careless about the work of their salvation—I know of no such grace of God revealed in scripture.

Now that in Christ we may perform works of righteousness, which God will accept and crown, is plain from the tenor of scripture. St. Paul desires, that the Philippians “might be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God^d.” And the same Apostle tells the Romans, “That being made free from sin, and become servants to God, they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life^e.”

^d Phil. i. 11.

^e Rom. vi. 22.

And if we would seriously consider it, we should find, that the more we believe this righteousness of faith in Christ, the more reason we have to perform works of obedience unto God; infinitely more indeed, than if we believed it not. For if our works would not be acceptable with God, unless they were complete in every point, as the law required; if there were no reward to be expected at the hands of God, unless we could merit it by the worthiness of our deeds; who, that considers his own weakness and insufficiency, would not despair, rather than endeavour to please God by his works? But we, who believe that they who serve God in Christ, will have their failings and defects covered by his righteousness, and so have their works accepted—what more powerful motive can we have, to induce us to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that” for the sake of his merits, not of our own, “our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord?”

2. And this leads me to remark secondly, that obedience to God's commandments is

necessary to Christians, not only because it is the end, for which Christ shed his blood; but because such obedience is the way and means ordained by God, by which we are to obtain the reward of eternal life, and without which we cannot attain it. On the one hand we have the Apostle instructing Timothy for the matter of his preaching, to “charge them that are rich in this world—that they do good; that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain, or lay hold on, eternal life:”—on the other hand, we hear him admonishing the Hebrews, to “follow holiness,” upon the ground that “without it no man shall see the Lord.” And what is the sentence, which will be pronounced upon the righteous, as our blessed Saviour himself tells us in the representation that he has given of the day of judgment? “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I

was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. For verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." What now shall we think of those, who consider good works as not necessary to their salvation, and therefore do them not? Will our Saviour pass this blessed sentence upon them? Or is it to be supposed, that Christ will change the form of the sentence, which he himself has told us will be passed, in the day of judgment? Is it to be supposed then, that the warning, which he has given us, is nugatory and false? Surely not: but they, on whom the sentence of happiness cannot be pronounced;—they, who have not been rich in the works of Christian righteousness;—they in short who have not been obedient to Christ's commandments; they have no other sentence to expect, than that which will be pronounced upon those on the left hand; "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for verily I say unto you, inas-

much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

And let it be here further noticed, that the works specified in these sentences of God’s righteous judgment, are works of the second table;—works of mercy and charity; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick;—works, which are too often decried, as not in any degree conducing to our everlasting happiness. But will it be so in the day of judgment?—True indeed it is, they *merit* not the reward which will be given them:—but what then? Are we so proud that we will do no works, unless we may claim merit from them? Is it not sufficient that God will reward them for Christ’s sake, though they have no *worth* in themselves? Let this suffice for the second argument to prove the necessity of obedience to Christ, because, although our best works can merit nothing, yet are they the means and way ordained by God, whereby we may attain the reward of eternal life.

3. A third and last argument to prove the necessity of works of righteousness to

those who call upon Christ and profess themselves to be his disciples, is, that such works are the only sign and testimony, whereby we know that we have a true and saving, and not a counterfeit faith. Let us hear the testimony of the beloved disciple. "If we say we have fellowship with Christ, and walk in darkness; we lie, and do not the truth." "Hereby we know that we know him," (that is, to be "our Advocate with the Father, and the propitiation for our sins,") "if we keep his commandments." "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as Christ is righteous^f." Faith in Jesus Christ is faith in the Saviour, who came into the world to save penitent sinners. And that only is a true saving faith, which leads sinners to repentance. Faith in Jesus Christ is faith in Him, who died to "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Nor can that be a true and saving faith, which does not show itself by its fruits of righteousness, and "work" (as the Apostle says) "by

^f 1 John i. 6. ii. 3. iii. 7.

love." Our Saviour himself therefore represents obedience to his commandments, as the sure and infallible criterion by which we may judge of our spiritual condition. For taking occasion from the mention of the words of the text, he demands, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things, which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings and *doeth them*, I will show you to whom he is like. He is like a man, which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth and *doeth not*, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth: against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." Upon these three arguments we may support the doctrine expressly delivered in the text; and so prove the necessity of Christians rendering obedience to the commandments of God. And whomsoever the motives, involved in these three arguments, will not

persuade to the practice of such obedience, let not my soul, O Lord, be joined with theirs, nor my doom be as theirs must be!

II. I proceed then to the second observation, nearly related indeed to the former, that in obedience to Christ is comprised not only abstinence from evil, but activity in doing good: that it is not enough for a Christian to live harmlessly, but he must exercise himself in positive virtue. For our Saviour in the text excludes, not only those who act in opposition to the will of his Father, but those also, who “*do not his Father’s will.*” It is the doing of good which he requires, and not only the not doing of evil. This is an error, which deceives a very numerous portion of mankind, even of those, who would seem to be religious. He is commonly esteemed a good man and a Christian; and is judged by himself at least, if not by others, to be in the way of salvation; who abstains from fornication, adultery, drunkenness, revellings; who is not a robber or a defrauder of other men; who is not guilty of profaneness, falsehood,

or other ordinary sins: although as to active works of piety and charity, as to a conscientious devotion of himself and all his talents to the service of God and man—as to these things, he practises them not, nor considers that they are required of him.

Such men are greatly deceived. God requires some duties at our hands, that he may reward them, not out of any merit which they possess, but of his own free grace, to his own glory, and according to his merciful promise in Christ Jesus. But the not doing of evil is not a service, on which a reward will be bestowed. A servant, who expects wages, a steward, who desires to be honoured by his master, (and what are we, any of us, but servants and stewards to our heavenly Master?) must not only do his employer no harm, but must do him some work, that is good and useful. If not, instead of a reward, he must be prepared for correction and punishment. In respect to our spiritual services, the scripture is express to the point. He that increased not his master's talent, though he had not mis-spent it, is sentenced

as an "unprofitable servant," and cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. The tree, that "beareth no good fruit," is hewn down, though it bear none that is evil. The fig-tree was cursed for having "no fruit," not for having evil fruit. The foolish virgins were excluded from the feast, not for having wasted but for having neglected to provide themselves with oil. And the sentence of condemnation, as we heard before, is to be passed in the great day for having failed in the active duties of Christian benevolence, the omission of which will be punished as a sin. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

III. Having thus seen the necessity of obedience, of active obedience to the will

of God, in those who call upon the name of Christ, and hope for salvation through him, it remains that we consider briefly, as was proposed, in conclusion, how the good works, required of a Christian, are to be performed.

1. And first, we must do them out of faith in Christ: we must rely upon him alone for their acceptance and reward: for in him alone God is well-pleased with us and with what we do; and therefore “without faith” and reliance upon him, “it is impossible to please God^s.” We must not think there is any worth in our works, for which the reward promised us by God is due: for alas! our very best works are full of imperfections, and fall far short of that measure which the law requires. Our reward therefore is not of merit, but of the merciful promise of God in Christ; which the Apostle means, when he says, “We are saved by grace, and not by works:” that is, it is the grace and favour of God in Christ which makes ourselves accept-

^sHeb. xi. 6.

able, and our works meet for a reward ;
and not any desert in them or in us.

2. Having laid this foundation of faith in Christ, the next thing required of us is sincerity of heart: we must perform the duties prescribed to us, not out of regard to profit, or praise, or the fear of men, but from the fear of God, and a conscientious reverence for his commandments. "Not every one," our Saviour declares, "that saith unto me, Lord, Lord; but he that doeth the will of my Father." Now it is the will of our heavenly Father, that we serve him in truth and uprightness of heart. "I know," saith David, "that thou, my God, triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness^h." And so the Lord said to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect," i. e. "upright, or sincereⁱ."

Would we know, whether we have this sincerity and truth of heart? If in our se-

^h 1 Chron. xxix. 17.

ⁱ Gen. xxiii. 1.

cret retirement, when there is no witness but God, we are as careful to abstain from sin, as we are in the sight of men; if, when God alone sees and knows it, we are as willing to do a righteous deed, as if it were published to the world;—if we find ourselves thus affected, we may trust, that our heart is true. In the presence and sight of men, we may easily be deceived; and fancy we do that out of conscience and fear of God, which we really do out of regard to the applause or censure of men. But when none are present but God and ourselves, then to abstain from evil and to do good, is a sign that we serve God, not in hypocrisy, but with sincerity and truth.

Would we desire (as indeed who would not?) to attain this sincerity and truth of heart? Let us strive to possess ourselves always with the sense of God's presence, and to walk before him as in his sight. Wheresoever thou art, there is an eye, that sees thee; an ear, that hears thee; and a hand, that registereth thy most secret thoughts: "For the ways of man," saith

Solomon, are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings^{*}.” Should we not be ashamed for men to know how much our hearts, and our words and actions disagree? Should we not blush for men to see us, committing a known and wilful sin, or neglecting a plain and prescribed duty? What an evil heart of unbelief then does it argue, that we should suffer the presence of a man, it may be even of a child, to prevent us from that wickedness, which the presence of God cannot hinder us from committing! Surely to have God continually before our eyes, and to be continually meditating on his all-seeing presence, aided by devout prayer for the assistance of his grace, would banish at length all hypocrisy and falsehood of heart, and beget in stead that truth and sincerity, which God loveth. Surely it might be expected, that we should labour to renounce all deceit and guile, if we could be thoroughly possessed of an awful sense of our lying open to that perfect Being, who is “about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways; who knoweth al-

^{*} Prov. v. 21.

together every word that is in our tongue, and understandeth our thoughts long before" they are uttered.

3. One other property of the obedience which God requires, is, that it be universal. We must not serve God by halves. We must not perform some duties, and neglect others. We must, as David says, "have respect to all God's commandments¹;" to those of the second table as well as those of the first; to the offices of morality, as well as those of religion; to our duty to man, jointly with our duty to God.

The duties of the first table are specially called the duties of religion: those of the second come under the appellation of morality;—honesty, probity, and charity. Now as a man can never be truly honest, unless he be religious; (for the love of God and a conscientious observance of his commandments is the only sure foundation of moral duty :) so on the other hand, whatever show of religion a man may

¹ Ps. cxix. 6.

make, he cannot be truly religious in God's judgment, unless he is honest in his conversation towards his neighbour. We know that all our duty, both to God and to our neighbour, is comprehended under the name of love: as in that summary of the law, "Love God above all things, and love thy neighbour as thyself." This is the summary of the whole law, contained in the two tables. But St. John tells us, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar^m:" as if he had said, He that seems religious towards God, and is without honesty towards his neighbour, he is a liar; he is destitute of true religion.

Would we know then, whether a man, who makes profession of religion by diligent attendance on the public services of devotion, be a sound, or only a seeming, Christian; let us take the universality of his obedience for the criterion by which we are to judge. For if, notwithstanding his attention to the duties of the first table, he disregards the second, which is enforced by

^m 1 John iv. 20.

the same authority, and does not endeavour to have a conscience void of offence towards his neighbour as well as towards God: if he be disobedient to parents and to lawful authority; if he be cruel and uncharitable; if he be unjust in his dealings, fraudulent, an oppressor, a breaker of covenants and promises, a backbiter, a slanderer, or in any other instance a violator of the duties which he owes to man: however in the outward forms of devotion, he may "seem to be religious, this man's religion is vain". His religion indeed is no better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, on whom our Saviour pronounced the sentence of condemnation; "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." They were scrupulous in the duties of the first table; they paid tithes even of mint and anise; they fasted twice in the week; they were exact observers of the Sabbath, and of other ceremonies of religion: but judgment, mercy, and faith in their conversation with men, our Saviour tells them, these they regarded not.

* James i. 26.

• Matt. xxiii. 13.

Upon the whole, and to conclude with a short summary of what has now been proposed for your consideration; let us bear in mind, that obedience to the commandments of God cannot but be indispensable to the salvation of us, who call upon the name of Christ; inasmuch as Christ gave himself for us, to enable us to perform it; inasmuch as he has ordained it to be the way and means, whereby we may attain eternal life through his meritorious sacrifice; and inasmuch as it is by obedience alone that a true and saving faith in him is manifested. Further, let us bear in mind, that such obedience comprises, not only abstinence from sin, but activity in the performance of our Christian duties; not only the “eschewing of evil,” but the “doing of good.” Finally, let us endeavour to practise it in that way, which the word of God requires. Let our obedience be founded on faith in Christ, and look to his merits alone to procure its reward:—let it be sincere; exerting itself in a conscientious fear of God, and reverence for his commandments:—and let it be universal, not contented with the ob-

254 *Obedience to Christ necessary, &c.*

servance of a part only, but extending (as far as human infirmity will allow) to the keeping of all the commandments of God. May the Spirit of grace enable us thus to act! And so may the blood of Christ render our imperfect services acceptable; and conduct us finally to the inheritance which he hath purchased for them, who “do the will of his Father which is in heaven!”

SERMON XII.

EFFECTS OF DISOBEDIENCE EXEMPLIFIED IN THE
PUNISHMENT OF SAUL.

1 SAM. xv. 22, 23.

And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

OBEDIENCE to his commandments is the test, by which at all times it has pleased almighty God to try the fidelity of his rational creatures. "To fear God and to keep his commandments," has been at all times "the duty of man." In the law,

which was given by Moses, the Israelites were commanded, to “love the Lord their God; to walk in his ways; and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments^a.” The dispensation of “grace and truth, which came by Jesus Christ,” declares it in terms equally unequivocal, to be no less the duty of the Christian to “love God,” and to show that love by “keeping his commandments^b;” and expressly sets before us the sum and essence of religion in that comprehensive sentence, that “circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God^c.” In one respect indeed the Christian revelation differs materially from the Jewish;—in that it represents in a clearer and stronger light the inability of weak and sinful man to keep God’s commandments as they should be kept; in that it more fully sets forth the imperfectness of our obedience, and so strips it of all meritorious claim to God’s favour; and as it more pointedly admonishes us to consider the

^a Deut. xxx. 16. ^b John xiv. 15. ^c 1 Cor. vii. 19.

favour, which God may be pleased to show us, as shown “not of debt, but of grace;” not as due to our merits, but as freely given for the sake of Jesus Christ. Still, as I said before, obedience to the commandments of God is no less strictly enforced by the Gospel than by the Law; it is no less the duty of the disciple of Christ, than it was of the follower of Moses. “If we would enter into life,” through the merits of Him who died to save us, we must “keep the commandments^d” whilst on the other hand, “the Lord Jesus shall take vengeance on the day of judgment in flaming fire on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ^e.”

It is from this consideration that the historical parts of the old Testament derive their principal interest. Take away from the Christian his obligation to keep God’s commandments, and it follows, that the examples of virtue and vice which the Jewish scriptures afford, however they

^d Matt. xix. 17.

^e 1 Thess. i. 8.

may interest us on account of the persons in whose characters and conduct they were exhibited, become altogether of no value, as to any effect which they might produce practically in ourselves. On the contrary let it be allowed, that the Christian is bound equally with the Jew to keep the commandments of God; and then every example of obedience on the one hand, and on the other hand every example of disobedience, which the old Testament contains, become respectively an encouragement or a warning to us, in our conduct towards that supreme Being, in whose sight, now as ever, "to obey is better than sacrifice," and who never faileth to "reject them, who reject his word."

Of the fatal effects of disobedience we have an awful example in the narrative, the moral of which is briefly comprised in the solemn declaration of the text. On this account, and because it affords an instance of several modes of self-delusion, which men are accustomed to practise for their own quiet, whilst they are living, as their consciences, if suffered to speak,

would tell them, in a state of enmity with God, and consequently in a state of extreme spiritual danger; I propose with the divine blessing to go through the narrative in detail, and to found upon it such observations, as may appear likely with the grace of God to render the example of disobedience before us of the greatest practical benefit to ourselves.

Saul having been exalted by the special appointment of the Almighty, and anointed king over Israel, was commissioned by the prophet Samuel in the name of the Lord of Hosts, to perform a specific service. The terms of the commission were plain and definite; and the service such as could not be mistaken. "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; I remember that which Amalek did to Israel; how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not: but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." The commission was a sentence of complete extermination, pro-

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nounced by the Lord of Hosts as an act of retributive justice upon a sinful people ; and intrusted to his chosen servant for execution ; for the accomplishment of a menace, which the Lord had before more than once delivered, that he would “ utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven[†].”

Such was the commandment given to Saul ; and such was the authority that gave it :—the authority was that of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel :—the commandment was to “ smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they had, and to spare them not.” Let us see now in what way the commandment was performed.

“ And Saul gathered the people together.—And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, which is over against Egypt. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive ; and utterly

[†] Exodus xvii. 14. Deut. xxv. 19.

destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good ; and would not utterly destroy them ; but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly." Such was the obedience which Saul manifested to the Lord of Hosts ; such was the way, in which he executed his commandment.

Now did we not know the "desperate deceitfulness of the heart of man," we should suppose, that after this instance of disobedience, Saul, conscious of his guilt, would have hid himself, if possible, from the Lord God ; nor have ventured to appear even in the presence of his Prophet. But that "stubborn and rebellious" spirit, which had prompted him to disobey the Lord, first made him blind to his guilt, and then instigated him to justify it. On the approach of Samuel, who had been deputed by the Lord to denounce punishment on the disobedient king, Saul betrayed no symptoms of a guilty and alarm-

ed conscience ; but received the Prophet with a salutation, which showed, not only that he was insensible to the fault which he had committed, but also that he gloried in the performance of it. “ And Samuel came unto Saul : And Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” Strange, that he could thus deceive himself into a belief, that he had performed a commandment, when his actions had been in direct opposition to it ! Strange, that he could think to deceive the Lord of Hosts, when nothing was wanted to convict him of disobedience more than the senses of the Prophet ! For “ Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear ? ” If thou hast performed the commandment of the Lord, what means the preservation of these cattle, the destruction of which was part of that commandment ?—Observe now the conduct of Saul ; and see how, when he is convicted of the fact of disobedience, he attempts to shelter himself from its criminality. And first, he endeavours to throw

the blame upon the people, who were under his command; who appear to have acted by his orders; and whom, even had he been unable to control them, he ought not to have "followed to do evil." "They have brought them from the Amalekites," said he; "for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God: and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Again condemned by the voice of the Prophet, accused of adding ingratitude to disobedience, and of sacrificing the word of the Lord to the gratification of his own covetousness, he sets up another principle of defence; and justifies his partial breach of the Lord's commandment upon the ground of having partly observed it. "And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the

spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord; and have gone the way which the Lord sent me; and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." Nay, not only does he thus justify himself by his partial obedience for the disobedience of which he was guilty; but he seems also to make a virtue of his sin, and to advance a claim to merit upon the very ground of the evil which he had committed. "But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things, which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal:"—as if any thing which man can devise, could be equally pleasing to the Lord, or equally the duty of man, as the keeping of God's commandments: or as if any voluntary acts and offices of religion could compensate for disobedience to a prescribed and known law! The fallacy of this noxious principle the Prophet accordingly declares in the words of the text; and having condemned the principle itself, proceeds to pass that sentence, which

the Lord had sent him to pronounce, upon the disobedient and sinful king: "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

Upon these particulars in the conduct of Saul, let us proceed to found such observations, as may appear likely with the grace of God to be practically beneficial to ourselves. Saul, acting under a special commandment of the Lord, was guilty of a direct violation of that commandment: yet blind to his fault, and even exulting in the commission of it, he exclaimed, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord." Is this delusion unnatural? is it uncommon? rather are there not multi-

tudes of men, who give themselves up to the same blindness and presumption? The same almighty Lord, who spake unto the Israelitish king by a prophet, "has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."—He proposes to us his commandments in language as plain and decided, as that which Samuel employed to Saul. He bids us make war against our spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil; he commands us to resist and subdue our sins; as expressly as he commanded Saul to make war against the sinners the Amalekites, and to destroy them. A commandment on the part of God implies a power to observe the commandment on the part of man, so far as to satisfy him who gave it. But more than this, he unequivocally tells us, that he will befriend us in this our spiritual warfare; that "his grace is sufficient for us;" that weak and inefficient as we are of ourselves, his "strength is made perfect in weakness." Plain as his commandments are, there are many persons, who slight, there

are many who disobey them. I speak not of casual delinquencies, the unavoidable effects of human infirmity: but I speak of the wilful breach, of the wilful neglect, of God's laws; I speak of duties, deliberately and repeatedly disregarded; of sins, deliberately and repeatedly committed; of vices, so often and so systematically followed, that they become at length habitual to the sinner; till they may be accounted "even as the garment, which covereth him, and as the girdle which he is alway girded withal^a." Of men like these, what shall we say? Is it to be supposed, that they knowingly and resolutely defy the vengeance of the Almighty, by a determined disobedience to his commandments; or is it not rather to be supposed, that they are in a state of spiritual delusion, blind to their sin and to their danger;—to the wrath of God, under which they are lying in this world, and to the punishment, which will be revealed against them in the next? If such indeed be the case; if it be the case, that the sinner can flatter himself that he is performing God's

^a Psalm cix. 19.

commandments, whils the is living in a state of habitual neglect or violation of them; we call upon him in the name of God to rouse himself from his delusion. “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light¹.” Reflect deeply and earnestly, “what will be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God^k?” For the very best of men;—for those who most diligently labour to “love God and keep his commandments,” and to tread in the steps of their Saviour Christ;—for the righteous, who shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father; even for them it will be necessary, that “their robes be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb^l.” But if the obedience of the sincere and faithful Christian need the merits of the Redeemer to recommend it; what shall become of the habitual despiser of God’s laws? “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear^m?”

¹ Eph. v. 14.^k 1 Pet. iv. 17.^l Rev. vii. 14.^m 1 Pet. iv. 18.

2. Saul attempted to shelter himself from the criminality of his disobedience, by casting the blame upon his army. "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord: but the people took of the spoil sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed." How notorious, how frequent is the attempt of the sinner, to extenuate his own guilt under the plea of the example or influence of others! Perhaps the plea may be altogether false; we may have been the means of seducing from their duty those, by whom we pretend to have been seduced: as appears to have been the case with Saul; for the history informs us, that "Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings and the lambs, and all that was good; and would not utterly destroy them:" and when we consider the authority, which he as a king possessed over his army, it is reasonable to conclude, that the act was principally and primarily his. But allowing the truth of the pretence; allowing that he "transgressed the commandment of the Lord, because he

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feared the people, and obeyed their voice :” who can plead for the validity of the excuse, and stand up in justification of the transgressor? On one side was the fear of God ; on the other the fear of man. In one direction he was drawn by the commandment of the Lord : in the other, by the voice of the people. Whether of the two was he to obey? My brethren ; let us beware, how we endeavour to shelter ourselves under the plea of another’s guilt ; and imagine that the delinquency of our neighbour will afford in the sight of God any justification of us. Let us look closely into our hearts. Let us take heed, that the temptation does not lie within. Let us be on our guard, that we be not our own seducers, and at the same time the seducers of others. Let us be sure, that we do not unwarrantably urge in our vindication the influence of vicious example, or the persuasions of the wicked, only as a cloke for our own wilful sin. But even where the example of others is really at hand to mislead us ; where the allurements of the world would seduce us from our obedience, or its persecutions would terrify us

from it: still let us beware how we build our defence upon so false and hollow a foundation. Is the voice of the world to be more regarded, or the commandment of God? the example of the world, or the example of Christ? Shall we seek the favour of the Almighty, or of that "world, whose friendship is enmity with God?" Shall we "fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; or shall we rather fear him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell?" Where the commandment of the Lord and the voice of the people are at variance with each other; let us be well assured that we make the right choice. By adopting the sinful practices of the world, we may conciliate perhaps its good-will: but if we would conciliate the good-will of our heavenly Father through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, it is only to be done by "loving him and keeping his commandments." According to those commandments, and not according to the example of other men, we shall be judged:

^a James iv. 4.

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if we are wise then, we shall make those commandments our rule of life. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."^o What is evil, the Apostle teaches us when he says, that "sin is the transgression of the law"^p : and of this we may be assured, that sin will never change its nature, and become righteousness ; evil will never be transformed into good ; however great may be "the multitude" of those, whom we "follow"^q to commit it.

3. Saul endeavoured to justify his partial breach of God's commandment, upon the ground of his having partly observed it. "Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." It may be doubted, whether there be any plea more frequently advanced in justification of disobedience ; or, at the same time, any, which can with

^o 1 Pet. iii. 12. ^p 1 John iii. 4. ^q Exod. xxiii. 2.

less show of reason be maintained. For, what shall we say? Is *universal* obedience, or is it not, the duty of man to his Creator? Do the commandments of God, or do they not, *all* of them require to be observed? Is his authority, or is it not, in *all* things binding upon his creatures? Surely if these questions be answered in the affirmative, (and who will dare, by answering them otherwise, to proclaim open rebellion against God?) it follows, as a necessary consequence, that, as by doing all that is commanded us, we should do no more than we ought to do; so, by doing less than is commanded us, we do less than we ought to do; and therefore, that what we do, cannot justify us for what we do not. Such is the reasoning of the Apostle: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point," (knowingly and wilfully offend,) "he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law^r:"—and therein a

^r James ii. 10, 11.

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despiser of that authority, by which the law was enacted. To justify us in despising God's authority in one case, we should at least be able to plead that we show him, in another, more honour than is due : to justify us in breaking his commandments in one particular, we should be able to plead, that we practise, in another, more obedience than he can claim:—a supposition this, which it were impiety to entertain, and blasphemy to support.

The same principle applies to that other plea, which Saul appears to have alleged in his justification, in making a virtue of his sin, and advancing a claim to merit upon the very ground of the evil which he had committed. “ The people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things, which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God.” Had not a positive commandment enjoined the destruction of all the possessions of the Amalekites ; and then had the Israelitish king offered a sacrifice of the spoil to the Lord, in testimony of his gratitude, and with a wish of doing honour to

his almighty Sovereign ; such an offering, we presume, would have been accepted. As it was, the offering was rejected with displeasure ; because he preferred his own imagination to the revealed will of God, which nothing could authorize him to disregard ; and robbed God of the honour which was due unto his name, and was expressly enjoined in one particular, under the pretence of performing to him a voluntary act of honour in another.

Here again then with respect to both of these delusive pleas, be it our business to take warning from the example of Saul. Let us strive that our obedience to the commandments of God be universal ; let us strive that it be strict and precise. Let us not be deluded by the conceit, that we may be justified by our observance of some precepts for the breach or the neglect of others, even of the least. Moreover, let us not foolishly impiously and arrogantly fancy, that we can perform any “ voluntary works, besides, over and above”

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what he has enjoined, so as to make compensation for any failures in our plain and prescribed duty. Conscious of our numerous sins, negligences, and ignorances in the general discharge of our duty; conscious moreover of manifold imperfections even in those parts of our duty, where we are least faulty; let us in all cases say, "we are unprofitable servants;" and throw ourselves for acceptance upon the mercy of our heavenly Father, through the meritorious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Upon the whole, the conduct of Saul in the narrative that has been passing before us, betrays evident symptoms of a heart actuated by worldly and false principles; and one in which the love of God and a desire to keep his commandments appear to have had little or no influence. May his fall be our admonition! May it join with other scriptural lessons in impressing these important truths upon our hearts: that "to obey God is better than" any other "sacrifice," which we can offer; that "the Lord hath not delight" in any service of his people so much as in their "obey-

ing the voice of the Lord ;” and that as to those, who stubbornly and rebelliously “ reject the word of the Lord, the Lord also shall reject” them from the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven !



SERMON XIII.

DECEITFULNESS OF SIN, AND EFFICACY OF REPENT-
ANCE, EXEMPLIFIED IN DAVID'S FALL AND
RESTORATION.

2 SAM. xii. 7.

*And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the
man.*

THE interest taken by mankind at large in the actions and sufferings of others, and the readiness, with which they apply reflections drawn from past events to their own particular circumstances, were remarked at an early period by the sages of antiquity. They perceived then, that an easier and more effectual method of recommending virtue and discouraging vice in their hearers might be practised, than that

of abstract reasoning or unadorned precept: and they found from their own private sensations and from the general disposition of the human mind, that although with the attentive hearer, reasoning might carry conviction, and the soundness of a moral precept might be allowed, yet their influence on the conduct of mankind in general was partial and transitory; whilst examples set before them in narratives of actual events, or of events, which might probably have occurred, not only operated with greater force in the first place, but were also calculated to make a deeper impression, and to retain a more lasting hold, upon the mind: for the hearer, having thus represented to him such events, as he either is, has been, or may be concerned in, puts himself into the situation of the person actually represented; and feels that with regard to the application of the example, "He is himself the man."

In conveying instruction by this method, as no people were earlier, so none were more successful, than the nations of the East. These nations indeed appear to have been

singularly qualified for that purpose, by the quickness of their feelings, and the liveliness of their imaginations; by the ease, with which the teacher could invent or adapt a story to the circumstances before him; and by the readiness, with which the hearers could apply it to their own particular cases. An example is accordingly related in the Book of Judges to have occurred as early as 1300 years before Christ; and the well-known fable of the trees, to which I am alluding, and which was delivered by Jotham more than 300 years before the time of the most ancient heathen writer, has perhaps been rarely excelled*.

On account however of the importance of the occasion, which produced it; of the effect, by which it was attended; and of the advantages, to which it may be applied; independently of its eminent beauty and propriety; no one can be more worthy of our attention, than that contained in the chapter, from which my text is taken. Da-

* Judges ix. 8—15.

vid, the king of Israel, the holy Psalmist, the chosen and the anointed of the Lord, the man after God's own heart, the representative of Abraham and of the Patriarchs, and the forefather of the promised Messiah, was polluted with crimes of the deepest and most deadly complexion. He had been guilty of the complicated sins of adultery and murder, aggravated by circumstances of baseness, cruelty, treachery, and oppression. He had dishonoured the wife of Uriah, whilst her husband was occupied abroad in fighting with the enemies of his country: he had in vain contrived and practised several disgraceful artifices, apparently in order to gratify the injured husband, but in reality to conceal from him the injury he had sustained: and at length knowing, that if Uriah survived, his own iniquity must be published, under the pretence of honouring a valiant and deserving officer, he caused him to be "set in the fore-front of the hottest battle," there to be deserted by the strength of the army, and with some of his immediate attendants to be slain by the hand of the enemy. Thus with a mind eminently en-

lightened, and with a heart generally conspicuous for its purity and tenderness, for its kindness to man, and for its devotion to God, did David most grossly violate the laws both of God and man: he “despised the commandment of the Lord, and did evil in his sight.” He “sat and spake against his brother^b.” He “gave his mouth to evil, and with his tongue he framed deceit^c.” He was polluted with “blood-guiltiness^d.” He was “partaker with the adulterers^e.”

That the Almighty should testify his displeasure at such grievous and complicated offences, might reasonably be apprehended: more especially was it to be expected among a people, in the moral government of whom he had continually and conspicuously interfered. Accordingly “the Lord sent Nathan unto David.” He sent to him a prophet and minister of his own, that such an one might have authority to rebuke the king: and at the same time he inspired him with

^b Ps. l. 20. ^c Ps. l. 19. ^d Ps. li. 14. ^e Ps. l. 18.

wisdom and discretion, that he might draw from the unconscious criminal the sentence of his own condemnation. Nathan therefore addressed himself to David in the following apposite parable. "There were two men in one city; the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man; and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him." At an act of oppression so flagrant and iniquitous, the indignation of David, disposed in general to distinguish clearly between right and wrong, and blind to the application of the narrative, was strongly excited. He instantly determined that the act

should be most severely requited, not only by the ordinary legal punishment^f; but in consideration of its peculiar enormity, by a punishment exceeding that of the law.

“ And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

“ And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have given thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him

^f Exodus xxii. 1.

with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house ; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly ; but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun." What must have been the feelings of David during this severe rebuke, this dreadful denunciation ! What must have been his mingled and overwhelming sensations of amazement, and shame, and terror, and dismay ! How must the king have been forgotten in the sinner ! how must the judge have been swallowed up in the criminal ! He had pronounced sentence on an act of iniquity, presented to his imagination, and now stood self-condemned in a penalty so much the heavier, in proportion as his own guilt was more enormous and more aggravated. Was the person accused before him in a state of pros-

perity? David was especially distinguished by the Almighty, and had been anointed by him with circumstances of peculiar favour king over Israel.—Had the rich man oppressively taken a lamb from his poor neighbour? David had taken from Uriah the wife of his bosom.—Had the rich man been guilty of cruelty and injustice? David had added to these sins artifice, and treachery, and the murder of an innocent and meritorious man, his subject, his friend, his defender.—Had the rich man shown no pity towards the victim of his tyranny? David unfeelingly exulted in the success of his nefarious stratagem.—The oppression of the rich man was confined to one unfortunate sufferer. David had involved others of his unoffending and deserving subjects in the destruction, which fell upon Uriah.—The sin of the rich man was suddenly resolved on, and hastily executed. Not such was the sin of David: it was the work of cool deliberation; he had proceeded in it step by step; and he was now resolutely revelling in the fruits of it.—But though the sin of David had been thus great, his heart was not closed against

conviction. Awakened to a sense of his sinfulness, the only thing, which remained for him to do, in order to show his compunction for his wickedness, he instantly resolved to perform. To Uriah, whom he had first bereaved of his domestic happiness, and who had then perished by his contrivance, no compensation could be made: to him his lamb could not be restored. He endeavoured then, the only retribution he could make, to humble himself, and to confess his iniquity before God. “And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.”

“And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.” Thus was accomplished the purpose intended by Nathan’s introduction of the parable in the chapter before us. It was the mean of convincing David of the enormity of his sin; of leading him in consequence to repent of and confess it; and thus of re-

storing him to the favour of almighty God, whose commandments he had despised, and whose displeasure he had kindled against him.

These things are recorded for our example. To every individual amongst us, who is placed in the same or in a similar situation to that of David, the sacred historian addresses himself; and says to us, as Nathan said to the king of Israel, "Thou art the man." Let us then revert more particularly to those parts in the narrative of David's sin and of his restoration, which appear "most profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The first notice that we receive of the incident, which led to the lamentable consequences that ensued, informs us, that it "came to pass in an evening-tide that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon." Thus far there appears no-

thing criminal in the conduct of David. The practice of walking and refreshing themselves in the cool of the day upon the tops of the houses, which were adapted to that purpose, was common with the Jews; and it appears to have been accident, which first directed the eyes of David towards the wife of Uriah. But when his eyes had been once attracted, and captivated by her beauty, his guilt then appears to have begun. Having first inadvertently discovered her, and been impressed with a sense of her charms, did he immediately withdraw his eyes from observing her, and retire within his own house, and banish her from his thoughts? Had he so done, he might by the blessing of God upon his exertions, have been enabled to control his passions; and thereby have been preserved from all the guilt shame and misery, which ensued. Is any of you placed upon the confines of sin, at the entrance of temptation? "Thou art the man," to whom the Holy Ghost speaketh in this narrative. Escape from the threshold of temptation, ere thou hast yet plunged into the labyrinth, from which thou mayest with diffi-

culty be extricated. Resist the tempter, ere thou art yet entangled in his snares. Struggle manfully against the first attack of a lawless passion. Evil thoughts and desires may present themselves to thy mind; and it may be not in thy power to avoid every occasion, on which they are likely to assault thee. He is the guilty man, who encourages them when they come, and follows them through the crooked and loathsome paths, whither, if encouraged, they will lead. Instead of banishing the object, which had attracted him, at once from his sight and from his mind, David "sent and inquired after the woman." The absence of her husband, who was fighting the battles of his country, afforded a convenient opportunity to his passion. I need not proceed with the sequel.

2dly. We are warned of the danger of indulging our sinful passions, and giving ourselves up to the power of the tempter, from the consideration, that guilt leads to guilt; that one sin is commonly the parent of others. The adultery of David with Bathsheba was not only criminal in itself,

(though than adultery, however it may be endured and palliated by the sophistry of modern morality, no crime is more injurious to society, or more hateful in the eyes of God;) but it was also criminal, as it occasioned baseness in the subsequent conduct of David; artifice upon artifice to conceal his guilt; the murder of Uriah; the involving of some of his subjects in sin by making them agents in that murder; and the exposing of others to destruction.—Art thou addicted to some favourite sin, the slave of some domineering appetite? “Thou art the man,” to whom God speaks by the mouth of his inspired historian. It were too much had you to answer for one sin alone. But search your conscience and it will tell you, that if you are a slave to one, you are not exempt from others.—Are you a profaner of the Lord’s day? The evil stops not there: you are probably guilty of intemperance also, or of gaming, or of thieving; and there is little doubt that you are that most pestilential of all characters, the corrupter of others.—Are you a drunkard? That is not all: can you be so, without adding to your abominable

vice the sin of enticing your fellows to be the same; without abandoning your duty to your family; without reducing perhaps your wife and children to hunger, rags, and beggary?—Are you a thief? you must be a liar to conceal it.—Are you malicious? malice feeds upon slander.—I notice some of the most prevailing sins, which beset us. But it will be found, that evil qualities, and it is the case also with the good qualities of the mind, are seldom, if ever, found alone. It was in natural progression, and according to a sort of order which prevails in the moral world, that the Apostle St. Peter exhorted his brethren in Christ Jesus, to “add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity^a.” And it was according to the same sort of order, and in pursuance of the same principle, that the Prophet Isaiah denounced “woe to the rebellious children for adding sin to sin^b.” David commenced with adultery;

^a 2 Peter i. 5, 6, 7.

^b Isaiah xxx. 1.

and there probably he meant to stop. But who shall say to the delusions of sin and Satan, "Hitherto shall ye come, but no further?" He commenced with adultery; he ran the career of deceit and treachery; and he ended with murder.

3dly. This narrative of the fall of David contains an awful warning upon the deceitfulness and danger of worldly prosperity. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God¹." Such was the sentence of our Saviour; and the example of David is a proof, how greatly those, who are in the enjoyment of this world's goods, stand in need of a more abundant supply of the divine grace. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto David, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul. And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I

¹ Matt. xix. 24.

would have given thee such and such things."—Art thou blessed in the enjoyment of temporal goods? "Thou art the man:" the Lord God speaketh unto thee: he bids thee "take heed and beware of covetousness^k;" he warns thee to "lay up treasures not on earth but in heaven^l;" he cautions thee not to be "a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God^m;" he charges thee not to presume upon thy prosperity, and neglect Him, who is the Giver of all good, by "despising his commandments, and doing evil in his sight."

It is a fourth and important doctrine, which this narrative inculcates, that morality ought to be considered as a branch of religion; that a breach of the second table of the commandments should be estimated as a breach of the first; that an offence against man is, in propriety and according to the tenor of God's revealed will, an offence against God. It does not appear that David had been guilty of any direct and immediate sin of a religious nature;

^k Luke xii, 15.
iii. 4.

^l Matt. vi. 19, 20.

^m 2 Tim.

but the offences, which he was guilty of, and they were of a moral nature, are expressly put upon that footing. "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife." Is there one who thinks that an observance of the duties of religion will extenuate a disregard of the moral law? "Thou art the man," whom the Lord admonishes in the sinfulness of David. He tells thee that to violate the moral law is to despise Him: that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world:" that "he who loveth God must love his brother also:" that "he that hateth his brother

* James i. 27.

° 1 John iv. 21.

cannot love God^p." The offence of David (for I repeat it) was against man: the punishment was denounced on it, as an offence against the Lord.

A fifth observation, which occurs to me from the incidents before us, relates to the duty of looking into our own bosoms, and the danger which we incur of pronouncing sentence upon ourselves, when we are condemning the conduct of others. It appeared to be a virtuous indignation, which broke forth from the lips of David, when he decreed restitution and death upon the rich man, who had oppressed his poor neighbour, and had shown him no pity. The sentence was severe; perhaps also it was merited. But happy it was for David that he was in the hands of a more merciful Judge, who did not "measure unto him with that measure that he meted withal." Art thou disposed to judge and to condemn thy brother? "Thou art the man." Look into thine own heart; examine thine own life. Is there nothing there which re-

quires correction? Beware, lest thou impose on another a law, which thou thyself disregardest. Beware lest thou sentence another to a penalty, which thou thyself oughtest to pay. "Judge not, that thou be not judged. Condemn not, that thou be not condemned¹." It was in his official capacity, as king of Israel, that David sentenced the rich man to punishment. Would it not have been just, had he been required to abide by that sentence? How much more, if you be required to abide by the sentence, which you, as a private man, unnecessarily and officiously pronounce?

As the example of David may serve us in these particulars for a warning against the dangers we are to avoid, it may also serve to guide us, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, into the way of righteousness and peace. Although his heart was deaf to the whispers of the still small voice within it, it did not refuse to listen to the piercing expostulation, addressed by the Prophet of God to his outward ears. His

¹ Luke vi. 37.

reason was clouded by sin; his feelings were benumbed; his conscience slept. But he could not resist the powerful appeal of God's authorized messenger, "Thou art the man." Thus conviction of his sin took possession of his soul;—conviction accompanied by contrition and repentance for having offended the Majesty of heaven; whilst the feelings of his heart were testified by the language of his lips, "I have sinned against the Lord." Happy the man, who has grace to see, to repent; to acknowledge and bewail his offences! Happy the man, to whom likewise the language of Nathan to David may then be applied, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." My brother, art thou a sinner, as David was? and dost thou desire that thy sin, like David's, should be put away? "Thou art the man:" "to thee is the word of this salvation sent:" If thou wilt call upon God to "have mercy upon thee according to his loving-kindness, according to the multitude of his mercies to blot out thy transgressions;

to wash thee thoroughly from thy wickedness, and to cleanse thee from thy sin; if thou wilt acknowledge thy faults and keep thy sin ever before thee[•];" if thou wilt "hate the congregation of the wicked, and wilt not sit among the ungodly; if thou wilt love the habitation of the Lord's house, and the place where his honour dwelleth; if thou wilt wash thine hands in innocency, and so go to the altar of the Lord, that thou mayest show the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all his wondrous works[†]:"—then for the sake of his well-beloved Son, who died to save sinners, he shall "purge thee with hyssop, and thou shalt be clean; he shall wash thee and thou shalt be whiter than snow; he shall turn his face from thy sins, and blot out all thine iniquities; he shall make thee a new heart, and renew a right spirit within thee; cast thee not away from his presence, and take not his Holy Spirit from thee; restore to thee the joy of his salvation, and uphold thee with his free Spirit[‡]." David confessed his sins unto the Lord;

[•] Ps. li. 1, 2, 3.

[†] Ps. xxvi. 5—8.

[‡] Ps. li.

and God "despised not his sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit," but forgave him the wickedness of his sin. Wouldest thou partake in his forgiveness? Like him be penitent for thy sins. Wouldest thou "hear with him of joy and gladness?" Strive like him to walk innocently, and put your trust in the Lord.

Upon the whole, and as the essence of this narrative of David's sin and restoration, we are taught, that however greatly a man may be favoured by the Almighty, yet if he will give way to the temptations of Satan and of his own vicious inclinations, he must expose himself to ruin; and that there is no other way to reconciliation with God, but by a hearty and deep repentance. Though he was "a man after God's own heart," the "chosen" of the Lord, David "departed from grace given, and fell into deadly sin," and became an object of abhorrence in the sight of that holy Being, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." He repented

* Ps. li. 17. † Art. XVI. ‡ Hab. i. 13.

and was forgiven. Had he not “by the grace of God arisen again and amended his life^a,” he would have been excluded from the place of forgiveness; and have been left under that unerring sentence of condemnation, which pronounces, that “no murderer hath eternal life^b,” and that “whoremongers and adulterers God will judge^c.” May it please our heavenly Father to grant us the help of his Holy Spirit, that we may truly repent of all our sins through faith in the merits of his Son; to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever!

^a Art. XVI

^b 1 John iii. 15.

^c Heb. xiii. 4.

SERMON XIV.

ON THE EXISTENCE AND DIVINITY OF THE HOLY
GHOST.

ACTS xix. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to pass that—Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghost.

And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

THE language and conduct both of St. Paul and of the persons, with whom he here converses, are worthy of attention; and may supply very suitable materials for our meditations on this festival, when

we commemorate the sensible communication of the same Holy Spirit, who was the subject of the Apostle's inquiry.

The narrative is briefly this. St. Paul being at Ephesus, and there finding certain disciples, his first question to them was, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?"—a question, the importance of which appears from its being the very first, that he asked. So far however were they from having received the Spirit, that they had not even been informed of his existence. "We have not so much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghost." So strange and unexpected an answer excited the astonishment of the Apostle, who supposed them to be disciples of Christ; and as such, of course acquainted with the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. "Unto what then were ye baptized?" he demands: and understanding by their reply, that it was "unto John's baptism," he first teaches them, that as John was to Christ; so was John's baptism to the baptism of Christ, only an introduction to that which was to come; and thence he

leads them to that holier baptism, where they both “heard of,” and “received, the Holy Ghost.”

This narrative may suggest two leading questions for our consideration; 1st, whether we have heard of the Holy Ghost; and 2dly, whether we have received Him: for the question, which from a sense of its great importance St. Paul first put to these disciples, he would not have put, but on the presumption, that they were better instructed than they really were. We will begin, then, with having recourse to that quarter, to which he referred them for information; and thence endeavour to “hear” concerning the Holy Ghost, both *that* he is, and *what* he is: both his existence, and his nature.

I. Now, had the Apostle chosen, he might have sent the disciples at Ephesus to other evidences of the existence of the Holy Ghost. He might have sent them to the very beginning of Genesis, where they would have heard of “the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the wa-

ters^a :”—or to the Law, where the same “ Spirit came down upon the seventy elders^b ;”—or to the Psalms, where they might have heard David say of Him, “ Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and they are created ;” and, “ Take not thy Holy Spirit from me^c :”—or to the Prophets ; as to Isaiah, for the words of Christ’s first text, “ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me^d ;” or to Joel, for the words of St. Peter’s text on this day, “ I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh^e .”

Or if they had ever heard of our Saviour Christ, St. Paul might have sent them to his conception, where they would have heard the Angel say to the blessed Virgin, “ The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee^f :”—to Christ’s baptism, where “ the Holy Ghost descended upon Christ” in a visible shape^g :—to his promise, so often repeated, of sending to them the Holy Ghost^h :—to his caution “ not to sin against the Holy

^a Gen. i. 2. ^b Numb. ii. 26. ^c Psalms civ. 30. li. 11.
^d Isaiah lxi. 1. ^e Joel ii. 28. ^f Luke i. 35. ^g Luke ii. 22. ^h John xiv. 36. xv. 26. xvi. 7.

Ghost¹;" it was a high and heinous offence; it could not be remitted.

Or if they had heard of the Apostles, St. Paul might have reminded them, of Christ's "breathing on them," and willing them to "receive the Holy Ghost²;"—or of the great event of this day, how he was visibly sent down, like "fiery tongues, upon each of them³;"—or of their solemn meeting and council at Jerusalem, where it was the tenor of their decrees, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us⁴:"—or of the alarming end which befel Ananias, with the admonition of St. Peter, that he had lied unto "the Holy Ghost;" and immediately after, that he had "lied not unto man, but unto God⁵."

But instead of taking either of these courses, St. Paul refers the disciples to their baptism, supposing that it was Christ's baptism, with which they had been baptized. Nor can we follow a better direc-

¹ Matt. xii. 31, 32. ² John xx. 22. ³ Acts ii. 3.

⁴ Acts xv. 28. ⁵ Acts v. 3, 4.

tion: let us take it, and we shall not fail to hear, "that there is a Holy Ghost." Express mention of Him is directly appointed in the form of baptism prescribed by our Saviour, that all should be, as all are, "baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost^o."

But there is another reason; why the Apostle could not refer the disciples better than to baptism. For the Holy Ghost has a special prerogative in our baptism above the other two Persons. That laver is his laver properly, where we are not only to be baptized into him, as into the other two; but also, even to be baptized with Him; which is proper to Him alone. For besides the water, we are there to be "born anew of the Holy Ghost" also, else there is "no entering for us into the kingdom of God^p."

A celebrated Father of the Church ^q, beginning with baptism, thus proceeds through three other degrees as naturally arising

^o Matt. xxviii. 19.

^p John iii. 5.

^q St. Basil.

from it. "As we are baptized, so we believe; and as we believe, so we give glory, and as we give glory, so we bless."—Are we baptized into the Holy Ghost? in Him also we believe: for "I believe in the Holy Ghost" is an article of that faith, in which "we desire to be baptized;" of which another article also is, that "of Him Jesus Christ was conceived."—Do we believe in Him? To Him also we ascribe glory, in that form of doxology, wherein the universal Church of Christ, from the beginning even to the present time, has given "glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."—Do we ascribe glory to Him? In his name also we pronounce and receive blessing, in the apostolical form of words, with which we pray that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion or fellowship of the Holy Ghost, may be with us all,"

Upon the whole; there is no baptism, no belief, no glory to God, no blessing

upon men, but that we hear of the Holy Ghost. Let us not say then, "We have not heard of him:" but rather, let us say with St. Basil, "We are baptized in him; and as we are baptized, so we believe; and as we believe, so we glorify God; and as we glorify God, so we bless men." That we may hear of the Holy Ghost, we need no more than reply to the Apostle's question, "Unto what then were ye baptized?"

II. But by referring to our baptism, we may perceive not only *that* He is, but also *what* He is: we may be instructed not in his existence only, but in his nature. And 1st, proceeding by the same steps as before, we shall perceive that He is God.

1. He is God: because we cannot be baptized into any name, but that of God alone. St. Paul disputes the point at large, that it is not lawful to be baptized into St. Peter's name, or into his own, or into any name but God's only. But we

are baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost: and therefore the Holy Ghost is God.

2. He is God: for we believe in Him. And never can it be supposed, that we believe in any creature, in any inferior being, but in God alone. Believing then in the Holy Ghost, we acknowledge him to be God.

3. He is God: for we ascribe to Him glory. And glory belongeth to God alone; and that so exclusively, that he himself expressly declares, "My glory I will not give to another¹." But we render glory to the Holy Ghost; and "with the Father and the Son together, he is worshipped and glorified." Therefore together with them also, He is God.

4. He is God, because we bless in his name. For this also is one of the properties of God, to bless in his name, by "putting his name on children," and on the congregation at large, "to bless them²."

¹ Isaiah xlii. 8.

² Numb. vi. 27.

But in the name of the Holy Ghost we bless, as well as in that of the Father and of the Son : together with them therefore he is “ God over all,” both to bless, and to be “ blessed for evermore.”

And upon these four particulars we rest for declaring the nature of the Holy Ghost. For, To be baptized into him, To believe in him, To ascribe glory to him, To bless by him or in his name, are such acts as cannot be given to any, but to God only : and therefore by referring to our baptism we are instructed in his nature as well as in his existence ; both that he is, and that he is God. Such again are the two acts ascribed to him in one of our professions of Faith, where it is said of him, that “ He is the Lord and Giver of life,” and that “ He spake by the Prophets.” Such also are many other attributes and operations, which cannot agree to any being, but God, and which are expressly ascribed to the Holy Ghost. These proofs of the divinity of the Holy Ghost might here be alleged, as elsewhere they have often been. But the text directing our thoughts to our bap-

tism, it may suffice to look to it, and to things more immediately connected with it, for the direction of our present inquiries.

If again then we cast our eyes back upon our baptism, we shall perceive something more relating to the Holy Ghost: and as we hear that he is God, so also shall we hear that he is God in the unity of the Father and of the Son. For there, though we are dedicated to three Persons, yet it is only "in one name." "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Now in the same manner as the Apostle reasoneth, "To Abraham, and his seed, were the promises made: he saith not, *to seeds*, as of many; but to thy seed, as of one^x:"—so we are baptized, not in the names, as of many; but in the name, as of one: one name, and one nature or essence. "I and my Father are one^y," saith Christ concerning two of them: "these three are one," saith St. John of them all jointly, "the Father,

^x Gal. iii. 16.

^y John x. 30.

the Word, and the Holy Ghost*." And whether it had been so said or not, the same truth do we hear distinctly revealed in our baptism, where we are baptized "in the name" of the three.

Again: they are one; not one Person, but one Being, as in the original is the import of the declarations both of Christ and of St. John. And the same appears from the form of baptism, wherein, as from the name we deduce the unity of the Godhead, so do we from the number of Persons deduce the Trinity. One as they are in name and nature, they are distinguished at the same time from each other. In our baptism, they are distinguished in number: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost:—at the baptism of Christ, they were distinguished to the sense, the Father being "heard in the voice from heaven," the Son "appearing in the water," and the Holy Ghost "descending from heaven in a bodily shape like a dove." This appears also to be a distinction of Persons, from

* 1 John v. 6.

the promise of Christ: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter^a:" another Comforter, namely the Holy Ghost; distinct from the Father, according to that saying in Isaiah, "The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me^b:" and distinct from the Son, as is evident from the words of Christ himself, in the promise already cited, where he speaks of "another Comforter," plainly, as such, different from himself. Moreover, he is distinct, as a Person: for, to omit other personal acts, ascribed to the Holy Ghost, such as to "be the Lord^c," to "speak^d," to "teach^e," to "reprove^f," to "comfort^f," to "bear witness^g," to "make overseers, or bishops over the church^h;" that which we hear alleged from scripture, as an article of our faith at baptism, that "of Him Christ in his human nature was conceived," is an act so personal, as can, with propriety of speech, be affirmed of none but of a Person.

^a John xiv. 16. ^b Isaiah xlvi. 16. ^c 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. ^d Acts xi. 12. xiii. 2. ^e 1 John ii. 27.
^f John xvi. 7, 8. ^g Rom. viii. 16. ^h Acts xx. 28.

The Holy Ghost then is a Person, distinct by himself; yet, as a Person, not *of* or *from* himself. And this indeed is implied in the term "Spirit." For like the term "Son," Spirit also has a relation to some other: respectively they proceed from him, whose Son, or whose Spirit, they are. So the Son of God, and the Spirit of God, proceed from God: each of them is God *of* God. The Holy Ghost then, inasmuch as he is the Spirit of the Lord, does by consequence proceed.

He proceeds; and that, both from the Father and from the Son. He "proceedeth from the Father," as expressly asserted by Christ in St. John's Gospel¹: he proceedeth also from the Son, as we infer from the outward visible sign of his communication to the Apostles, when the Son "breathed on them," and so bade them "receive the Holy Ghost²." The same inference follows from that declaration of Christ in another place, "He shall not speak of himself, but he shall receive of

¹ John xv. 26.

² John xx. 22.

mine¹." In short, he is "sent by the Father," and he is "sent by the Son"^m also: and so, he is "the Spirit of the Father," and also "the Spirit of the Son".

He proceeds from them; but not by the way of generation: that term is peculiarly applied to Christ, who is often called "the only-begotten;" and therefore, as it is not in scripture, so neither can it be properly applied to any but to Him. In the old Testament it is said, that "God sendeth forth his Spirit:" in the new, the term by which this is expressed, is that "he proceedeth." In professing our belief of such mysteries, we retain the language of scripture; and so long as we do so, we cannot err. The term "spirit" may lead us to consider the proceeding of the Holy Ghost, as something analogous to the emission of the breath, which bears the same name, and has a resemblance to it, breathed forth from the natural body. But it is neither wise nor useful, perhaps it is not altogether

¹ John xvi. 13, 14.

^m Matt. x. 30. Gal. iv. 6.

ⁿ John xlv. 26. xv. 26.

^o Psalm civ. 30.

pious, to be very minute as to such particulars as these.

Now all these points of doctrine relating to the Holy Ghost, are expressed or implied in our baptism. Still there is one thing more to be observed, and it is that which more especially arises from the text, that the Holy Ghost *proceeds* from the Father and the Son, that he may *come* to us: he is *breathed forth* from them, that he may *inspire* us: he is *sent* by them, that he may be *given* to us: the love of God is “shed abroad in our hearts,” saith the Apostle, “by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us:” given unto us, that we may *receive* him. And so we are naturally led to the second question, proposed for our consideration, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost?” For having been so far instructed concerning him, and having heard the particulars which have arisen in the foregoing inquiry, there is one thing more for us to know; namely, that we must not only “hear of him,” but must “receive him” also: must not only be instructed in,

^a Rom. v. 5.

and hold fast, the true faith concerning him, but must also be partakers of his fellowship, and enjoy the sanctifying graces which he bestows.

The prosecution of the inquiry into this part of the subject, suggested by the text, involving the obligation, under which we lie of receiving him; the proofs, whereby we may know whether we have received him; and the means, whereby he may be received; would occupy more of our time than could be bestowed on it upon the present occasion. We will therefore reserve it for another opportunity. In the mean time, some remarks arising from the examination, in which we have at present been engaged, shall close the present discourse.

And 1st. Are we persuaded from the testimony of scripture, that "there is a Holy Ghost?" Let us "hold fast the profession of our faith" in this, one of the fundamental and most characteristic articles of our Christian faith, "without wavering." It was out of the power of human reason to discover this mysterious

truth, without express revelation; being revealed, it is the duty of reason to receive and maintain it. Among the prevailing signs of the times, among the errors which most conspicuously mark this, which we vauntingly esteem, an enlightened age, is a deplorable indifference, as on the one hand to a conscientious practice of Christian duty, so on the other to a well-established faith in the Christian doctrines. With some it is judged a matter of trifling import, whether a man has any religious faith at all: with others, who profess to take the Gospel for their rule of faith, it is thought indifferent, whether those tenets, which are in truth the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel, be believed or not; contented with such a profession of Christianity, as a Heathen could hardly except against, and a Mahometan might with little difficulty adopt. Of the heresies, which thus disgrace the professors of Christianity, those false opinions, which relate to our blessed Saviour and to the Holy Ghost, the second and third Persons in the "Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity," are among the most prevalent and the most mischievous: mischievous indeed they are; for if the doc-

trines, which they oppose, be the true doctrines of that Gospel, on the belief of which it has pleased almighty God to suspend the promise of salvation, what have they to hope who wilfully slight or reject them? Let it not be supposed then, that such inquiries, as that in which we have now been engaged, can be useless or unimportant. In the judgment of the Apostle, as very evidently appears from the tenor of the text, *to have heard* concerning the Holy Ghost was esteemed essential to a knowledge of the elementary principles of Christianity. How then can we be ignorant of it, and be blameless? It is one of the articles of that faith, of which, in conformity to the universal practice of the Church of Christ, we made profession at our baptism. How shall we be hardy enough to renounce it?

2dly. Do we believe in the Divine nature, as well as in the existence, of the Holy Ghost? Do we believe, not only that he is, but that he is God? Let us give him then that glory, honour, and worship, to which, as God, he is entitled. To him, jointly with the Father and

with the Son, we were dedicated at our baptism. Let him, together with them, receive all the service, which we, weak and sinful creatures, can bestow;—the profession of our belief, the tribute of our adoration, the invocation of blessings in his name. It is this consideration, which converts such inquiries as the present, from matters of speculation into matters of practice. It is our duty to worship God: to withhold worship from him is impious. If then the Holy Ghost be God, (and the same applies to our blessed Saviour,) it is our duty to worship him: it is impious to withhold from him our worship. To some persons such inquiries, as the present, appear little interesting and important, inasmuch as they are deemed to have little connection with Christian practice. But what branch of Christian practice, what part of a Christian's duty, is more intimately blended with his well-being, both now and ever, than the performance of his devotions? How then can that inquiry be unimportant, which instructs us as to the proper object of our devotions; or which is calculated with the divine blessing to strengthen

our faith in Him, to whom our prayers are to be addressed?

3. Do we believe the Holy Ghost to be united with the Father and the Son, one God? Whilst a persuasion of this truth directs us “to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the divine Majesty to worship the Unity^o,” let the reflection upon that perfect harmony, which distinguishes the Lord God of heaven, prompt us to cultivate union among our brethren upon earth. As the holy Three are essentially one in name and in nature, so let us study to be united, not in profession only, but in brotherly love and affections; and to glorify God by “being perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,” “with one heart and with one mouth.” This is an inference, to which Christ hath directed us: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one: as thou, Fa-

^o Collect for Trinity Sunday.

ther, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me ^{p.}”

4. Do we believe that the Holy Ghost is a Person? Let the various evidences of that truth be our security against the mistake of those, who represent him, as only an operation or quality of the Father; and so endeavour to sap the foundations of the true “faith, which was once delivered to the Saints.”

5. Do we believe, that he proceedeth from the Father and the Son? Let this conviction induce us to look with gratitude unspeakable upon the holy Three, for their continual participation in the work of our redemption: in that when the Father had contrived the plan of man’s salvation by sending his Son into the world, and the Son had executed it by dying for our sins and rising for our justification; they concurred in “sending the Holy Ghost, the Spirit both of the Father and

^p John xvii. 20, 21.

of the Son," to enlighten our understandings, to sanctify our hearts, and to "guide our feet into the way of peace."

Finally, do we believe, that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son, that he may come unto us?—that he is sent by them, to be given unto us? Let us make every provision in our power, that we may be prepared to receive him. Let us labour to remove from ourselves every offence, whereby we may be defiled. Let us be diligent in practising the means, which may best fit us for his reception: that so we may indeed be "the temple of God," and that "the Spirit of God may dwell in us;" and that from endeavouring to "glorify him in our body and in our spirit, which are his," we may enjoy the delightful assurance that "he is our God, and that we are his people!"

Main body of text, containing a list of entries or items.

SERMON XV.

NECESSITY, EVIDENCES, AND MEANS OF RECEIVING
THE HOLY GHOST.

ACTS xix. 2.

*And he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy
Ghost, since ye believed?*

IN a former discourse on these words and on the passage with which they are connected, we inquired into the existence and nature of the Holy Ghost. It follows that we are now to consider the question, "whether we have received Him?"—a question, which involves in it these three points: 1st. The obligation, under which we lie, to receive him. 2. The proofs, by which we are to judge, whether we have

received Him, or not. 3. The means, whereby He may be received.

I. Now, as to the first of these points, namely, our obligation to receive the Holy Ghost: the importance of it appears from this, that St. Paul makes it the leading subject, the very first particular, of his inquiry. The same will also appear from the reason of the thing.

For should the question be asked, Where is the necessity of this? What need have we to receive any Spirit at all? May we not, of ourselves, of our own power, do every thing that is required of us? We answer, no: for holy we must be, if we would ever "rest on God's holy hill:" inasmuch as "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But holy we cannot be, by any moral or acquired habit. No philosophy can bestow it on us. As we have our faith by illumination, so by inspiration we have our holiness: they are given to us, we receive them, both from without. The philosopher attained to what he called a habit of virtue; and so may the Christian.

But that will not suffice ; it will raise us no higher than it did the Heathens : it will carry us no further than the origin, from which it springs : it will not lift us above earth and nature. “ That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” The question of the Apostle therefore is not, Have ye acquired a habit, but “ Have ye received the Spirit ?”

Again : should it be demanded, But why receive the Holy Spirit ? Will it not suffice to receive any Spirit but Him ? Again we answer, no : and the reason is, because it is nothing here below, which we seek, but we aspire to heaven. If then we would reach to heaven, something from heaven must exalt us thither. If we hope to be “ partakers of the divine nature,” as we have “ great and precious promises” that we shall be, it can be effected by no other means, than by receiving one, in whom the divine nature is. He, being received, imparts it to us, and so makes us partakers of his nature. And He, who does this, is the Holy Ghost.

For is it not absolutely necessary that we "receive the Spirit," in order to our living the life of nature? No less necessary is it, that we receive the Holy Spirit, else we cannot live the life of grace; nor, in consequence, shall we ever come to the life of glory. To receive the Spirit conveys the natural life; to receive the Holy Spirit conveys the spiritual life.

Between the natural and the spiritual life a correspondence prevails in several respects. Was the world made in the beginning by "the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters?" So was the world new made, the Church or the Christian world, by the same Spirit moving on the waters of baptism. Did we, in the first Adam, come into this present life, by "the breath of life sent into our bodies?" So in the second Adam, we are led to the other life by the Holy Ghost sent into our souls. Was Christ "conceived by the Holy Spirit?" By the same Spirit the Christian also must be conceived. These things are necessary to our spiritual existence, nor can we do without them.

2. But there is another consideration, which shows the necessity of his being received. The house will not remain empty long^b. Some spirit or other, holy or unholy, will enter and take possession of it. The greatest part of mankind are occupied, some by "the spirit of deep sleep^c," so that they pass their time in a state of insensibility, without any sense of God or religion at all:—others, by "the spirit of perverseness^d," so that they reel to and fro, agreeably to their own distorted and unruly imaginations, and are every year of a new religion:—others, again, by "the spirit of error^e," so that, as a punishment for their wilful disregard of the truth, they are given over to "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Moreover, even of those, who seem to know the truth, some are contaminated by "the unclean spirit^f;" some are inflamed by "the spirit of envy^g;" some are possessed by divers other malignant spirits, who "walk about, seeking whom they may devour." It is

^b Luke xi. 24. ^c Isaiah xxix. 10. ^d Isaiah xix. 14.
^e 1 Tim. iv. 1. ^f Luke xi. 24. ^g James iv. 5.

necessary therefore for us to receive and entertain the good Spirit, that some evil and noxious spirit may not enter into our hearts, and dwell therein.

3. There is a third reason, whence the necessity of our receiving the Holy Spirit appears; inasmuch as with Him we receive all the things that we want for our souls' good. It is indeed for these several offices that he is sent. By Him we are first regenerated at our baptism^h. By Him we are afterwards confirmed, in the imposition of handsⁱ. By Him we are "renewed in the spirit of our mind^k," when we fall into sin. By Him we are "taught, throughout our lives, the things necessary to our spiritual welfare^l: put in mind of the things which we have forgotten^l: "stirred up" where we are dull^m: "helped" in our prayersⁿ; relieved in our "infirmities;" "comforted" in our heaviness^o; in a word, "sealed to the day of our redemption^p," and "raised up again in the

^h Tit. iii. 5.

ⁱ Heb. vi. 2.

^k Eph. iv. 23.

^l John xiv. 26.

^m 2 Tim. i. 6.

ⁿ Rom. viii. 26.

^o John xiv. 16.

^p Eph. iv. 30.

last day¹." Go all along, even from our baptism, to our very resurrection, and we cannot do without Him, but receive Him we must.

And on the other hand, if we do not receive Him, nothing else that we receive, will do us any good. Receive the word, it is but "a killing letter²:"—receive baptism, it is but John's baptism, but a "weak and beggarly element³:"—receive the flesh of Christ, it "profiteth nothing⁴:"—receive Christ; it is in vain; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his⁵." Christ renounces him; he hath no part in him. To receive Christ, and not the Holy Ghost, were to no purpose. Upon the whole, if we receive not the Holy Ghost, we are in our natural state; we have "a living soul," but we are not actuated by "a quickening spirit⁶." And "the natural man," as the Apostle teaches us, "neither discerneth nor receiveth the things of God⁷:" he does not rightly apprehend

¹ Rom. viii. 11. ² 2 Cor. iii. 6. ³ Gal. iv. 9.

⁴ John vi. 63. ⁵ Rom. viii. 9. ⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 45.

⁷ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

them in his understanding ; he is not made partaker of them in his heart ; so that not to have the Spirit is of itself sufficient for our condemnation.

II. The fellowship of the Spirit appearing thus necessary, we proceed to the second point proposed for our consideration, namely what are the proofs, by which we may judge whether or not we have received Him.

Now the signs of the Spirit are not difficult to be discovered. For what are the signs, by which we know that the natural spirit actuates the body ? It beats at the heart ; it breathes at the mouth ; it is felt in the pulse. Such as these are the signs of the Spirit ; and although some or other of them may, all of them will not, deceive us.

1. The Spirit beats at the heart. For, what saith the Prophet ? “ A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” And so the Apostle exhorts

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

the Ephesians, to “be renewed in the spirit of their mind^a.” That a new spirit is received, there is no better criterion than new thoughts and new desires. So that he who watches well the current of his desires and thoughts, may know what is the spirit by which he is led, whether it be old or new. We may know that we have received the Spirit, by the fear of God, impressed upon our hearts, to restrain us from evil; and by the love of God, shed abroad in them, to impel us to good.

2. But then, as every man may affirm, that all is well within him; and it is impossible to know, whether what he affirms be true or not: therefore we go a step further, and say; the same spirit, which is the principle of our life, is also the principle of our voice: by the breath, that we live by, by the same also we speak. Here therefore is a second criterion. “I believed,” saith the Psalmist, “and therefore have I spoken^b :” and, as the Apostle reasons, “We having the same spirit of

^a Eph. iv. 23. ^b Psalm cxvi. 10.

faith, we also believe, and therefore speak^c." When the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles and first Christians, they spake with new tongues, different from those, with which they had spoken before. The miracle is ceased; but the moral of it still holds good: where the Holy Ghost is received, there a change is produced in the language:—a change from "malicious, unclean, corrupt communication^d;" unto "such as becometh saints^e."

3. But then again, because the language of sanctity may be assumed, even where no holiness is found within, we look further to the pulse, to the hand, to the actions, for a third criterion, whereby to judge of the spirit. As for that which is in the heart, "who," as the Prophet demands, "who can know it?" We are not ourselves equal to the task: our own hearts often "deceive" us. Then again, as to the language; there are some, as St. Paul warns us, who "profess that they know God, but in works deny him^f."

^c 2 Cor. iv. 13.

^d Eph. iv. 31.

^e Eph. v. 3.

^f Jer. xvii. 9.

Tit. 6.

This therefore may mislead. For this reason we have recourse to “the work of faith^b,” as affording a third criterion, necessary to our satisfaction. For as on the one side faith, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit, “worketh by love^c,” as St. Paul says; or, in the language of St. James, “shows itself by the works^d” of a religious and charitable life; so, on the other hand, it is plainly asserted by the latter Apostle, that “faith without works is dead^e,” it is no better than a carcass; it is altogether destitute of the Spirit.

It is true indeed, that works are not an infallible criterion, whereby to judge in this matter: for as there are “vain men^m,” who boast of the Spirit, without works; so there are hypocrites also, who counterfeit the works of religion, without the Spirit. The best mode of discerning between the counterfeit and the real, is, to observe, whether they appear to spring freely and naturally from the heart, or to be wrought with constraint and affecta-

^b 1 Thess. i. 3.

^c Gal. v. 6.

^d James ii. 18.

^e James ii, 26.

^m James ii. 20.

tion ;—whether they are uniform, constant, and permanent ; or variable, faint, and evanescent, vanishing “ like the morning cloud, and going away, like the early dew^a.” It is one character of the Spirit, which was the object of David’s supplications, that it is “ upright” or “ constant :” it is another, that it is “ free” and unconstrained^o. The application of these marks of distinction to the works which we perform, may lead us to perceive, where they are wrought by artifice and hypocrisy, instead of proceeding from the spirit of true piety and religion.

And these signs may guide us in judging whether we have received the Spirit. More particularly however with a view to the quality of Him, whom we are under the necessity of receiving, it is further important to inquire whether it be the Holy Spirit, or not, that we have received. We may be actuated by a spirit, in heart, in speech, in action ; and yet not by Him, by whom alone we ought to be actuated. St.

^a Hosea vi. 4.

^o Psalm li. 10, 15.

Paul several times makes this distinction. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage, but ye have received the spirit of adoption^p." And again, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind^q." And again, in words more especially applicable to our purpose, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God^r;" in other words, the Holy Spirit. Would we know whether the spirit, which actuates us, be the "spirit of the world" or "of God," be unholy or holy, be from earth or from heaven? Let us, in addition to the points already suggested, consider the motive, which influences our conduct; and the end, which we desire to attain. If we act from a worldly motive, or with a view to a worldly end, it may be in a certain sense virtue, but it is not that virtue, which cometh from above.

For example, I refrain from sinning. What is my motive? Because (as Micah saith) it is against "Omri's statutes^s," some

^p Rom. viii. 15. ^q 2 Tim. i. 7. ^r 1 Cor. ii. 12.
^s Micah vi. 16.

penal law. I shall incur such a penalty ; I shall be liable to such an action, if I do not. It is well to do so ; but still all this is but " the spirit of the world : " it has its origin in the fear of men : it does not proceed from the sanctuary of God.

I go further, to a better spirit. Though there were no penal law, I refrain from sinning, because it is brutish, and therefore at variance with reason ; or ignominious, and therefore subversive of my credit and reputation. Nay, further still : because I shall thereby endanger my soul, inasmuch as it will exclude me from heaven, or be the means of casting me into hell. These again are of earthly origin : the spirit of philosophy, the spirit of bondage ; they may indeed, and they often perhaps do, the latter more especially, lead to better things ; but of themselves they are not the spirit of piety and religion. But if, out of regard to God, I refrain from sinning ; because by sinning I should offend Him, and do evil, against the rule of his justice, the majesty of his authority, the awful reverence, which I ought to entertain for his

power, and the gratitude, which I owe for his bounty and goodness : this in truth is the spirit of the sanctuary ; this has its origin in heaven ; this is the Holy Spirit indeed.

Together with the motive, which actuates us, let us look also to the end, which we wish to attain. If it be the end of Demetrius, as recorded in the chapter before us, “ by this we have our advantage^t :” if it be the same with theirs, who prefaced their exertions with “ let us make us a name upon the earth^u :” in a word, if worldly profit, or worldly honour, or any kindred object, be the mark at which we aim, the spirit, which actuates us, is not “ of God,” but “ of the world.” But if of our well-doing the will of God is the centre, and his glory the circumference ; if we do it, not that our will, but that his, may be done ; not that our name, but that his, may be hallowed ; the act is holy, and the spirit, that actuates us, is the same.

III. The foregoing reflections may enable us to answer the question of the Apo-

^t Acts xix. 26.

^u Gen. xi. 4.

stle, whether “ we have received the Holy Ghost ? ” It remains that we proceed to the third point, proposed for our consideration, namely, how we may, by the grace of God, so dispose ourselves, that we may receive him.

The method is two-fold : one, that we lay no obstacles in the way to prevent him from coming to us ; the other, that we practise all the means, which may allure him to come.

For 1st, St. Stephen teaches us that there is such a thing as to “ resist the Holy Ghost ^x.” And we then resist him, when we lay any impediments in his way, or indeed do not endeavour to remove them out of it. Of these impediments there are some, which the scriptures especially point out to us.

One, and a chief one, is pride. For the Holy Ghost will not dwell, but “ with the humble ^y,” as Isaiah saith : nor doth God,

^x Acts vii. 51.

^y Isaiah lvii. 15.

saith Solomon, “ give grace, but unto the lowly :” At his first coming he “ lighted upon *him* ^a,” who was “ meek and lowly in heart ^b ;” and he willeth us to learn of him, that we also may “ put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which” (however the world may slight or despise it) “ is in the sight of God of great price ^c.”

Another impediment is carnality, or impurity. For spiritual and carnal are as directly opposed to each other, as heaven is to earth. Without cleanness, there can be no holiness. The unclean spirit must be cast out, before we can be prepared to receive the Holy Ghost. He will come into our bodies, as into a “ temple ^d,” dedicated to his service, and undefiled by worldly lusts,

A third principal impediment to the receiving of the Holy Ghost, is “ the spirit dwelling in us,” which, as St. James saith, “ lusteth after envy ^e ;”—after envy, or malice, or whatever else savours of “ the gall

^a Prov. iii. 34. ^b Matt. iii. 16. ^c Matt. xi. 29,
^d 1 Pet. iii. 4. ^e 1 Cor. vi. 19. ^f James iv. 5.

of bitterness :” in which whosoever are, St. Peter unëquivocally warns us, “ that they have no part, or fellowship ” in the gifts of the Holy Ghost. He is indeed by nature the Spirit of love, as well as of holiness : and it is one of his offices, to “ shed abroad love in our hearts.” But how can He dwell in a heart, already occupied by a different guest ? how can love be received, if “ malice ” be not first “ put away ? ”

These impediments then, pride, lust, and malice, being removed, we are to invite the Spirit to dwell in us by all the means, which he approves of and hath appointed. For this purpose, we must betake ourselves to the place, and visit it often, in which he delights to “ come down and talk with ” his worshippers, even “ the tabernacle of the congregation.” For there is no place on earth, which he more frequents, or wherewith he holds more constant intercourse, than with the holy places, “ where he hath recorded his

† Acts viii. 21, 23. § Rom. v. 5. † Exod. xx. 24.
Numb. xi. 16.

name;" for thither doth " he come unto us, and bless us" with his blessing.

Being there, there is an obvious method, whereby we are to receive him, namely the performance of the duty, which ought principally to bring us to his sanctuary. It is not the ordinary rule of God's proceedings to bestow upon us his blessings, especially his greatest, his spiritual blessings, unless we seek for them by prayer. But to devout and constant prayer, there is no blessing which God hath not promised to grant: and as of others, so of this more especially, we are assured by Christ, that " His heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Himⁱ."

A second mean, whereby we are to receive Him, is " the word of the Lord:"—that word, " which," as St. Peter saith, " by the Gospel is preached unto us^k." Indeed it is our own fault, if it doth not profit us: for the Lord hath promised us by a Prophet, that " his words and his Spirit

ⁱ Luke xi. 13.

^k 1 Pet. i. 25.

shall not part^l;" but shall continue with us for ever. Of this we have an example in the hearers of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost; and again in Cornelius and his family at Cæsarea, where upon the preaching of Peter, even "while he yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word^m."

That we see not this effect produced by the word, the reason is, that it is no sooner heard than it is forgotten. With Felix perhaps we "tremble" at the preacher's reasoning "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," but we interrupt the train of seriousness excited in us, and defer the hour of meditation and improvement until a more "convenient time." With Agrippa we are somewhat moved perhaps by a powerful appeal to our conscience; but contented with being "almost persuaded to become Christians," we hastily dismiss the subject from our thoughts. To profit effectually by the word preached to us, we should withdraw from the noise

^l Isaiah lix. 21.

^m Acts x. 44.

and tumult that surround us, and retire to some place, where we might be by ourselves; that when we have heard him by his minister speak *to* us, we might hear also what he will speak *in* us:—that when we have heard the voice before us, we might hear also that “behind us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it^a:”—that when we have heard the voice sounding in our outward ears, we might hear that also, “which speaketh,” as it did to Job, “in silence^o;” that “still small voice,” which whispers inwardly to the heart:—that there we might hear him “reprove” us, “teach” us, “comfort” us within. It is for this cause that we are so often admonished to “commune with our own hearts^p:” for it is by “musing” and meditation, that “the fire is kindled^q” and kept alive, which otherwise would languish and die. And certain it is, that many sparks of religion, for want of this, are soon extinguished. As fast as the word is written in our hearts, it is taken away again: as fast as “the good seed is sown, the fowls come and devour

^a Isaiah xxx. 21.

^o Job iv. 16.

^p Psalm iv. 4.

^q Psalm xxxix. 3.

it:" and so our receiving is in vain, and the word and the Spirit are separated, which would otherwise continue together.

Lastly, as the word and the Spirit, so "the flesh" and the Spirit go together;— that "flesh," which was "conceived by the Holy Ghost;" and which is bequeathed by Christ to his faithful followers, mystically given to them in the sacramental elements, that it may be the means of communicating to them the same Holy Ghost, by whom it was conceived. By worthily partaking of that bread, "we eat a spiritual meat:" by worthily communicating in that cup, "we drink a spiritual drink;" or (as the same Apostle elsewhere expresses it) "we are made to drink of the Spirit." "Take, eat, this is my body; drink ye all of this, for this is my blood;" are the words, with which our Saviour puts the elements into our hands; and as we receive of him the outward emblems, so also we receive the inward spiritual grace, and therewith the Spirit who communicates it, if the fault be not in ourselves.

^r 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.

^s 1 Cor. xii. 13.

If then, we would invite the Spirit in deed; and if each of these, severally by itself, be appointed as effectual means for procuring him; let us, my brethren, unite them all, and employ them together. "Take to you words," the words of which Hosea speaks, words of earnest invocation; "and turn to the Lord, and say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously:" "Receive, or take to you, the word," spoken of by St. James, which is "ingrafted" into you by the office of preaching. "Receive the body, receive the blood of Christ," the instituted channel by which he communicates with us by his Spirit. Take all these together;—prayer, uttered in "the spirit of supplication";—the words, that Christ speaketh unto you, "for they are spirit, and they are life";—"the bread of life," and "the cup of salvation:" and ye may with humble confidence answer St. Paul's question in the affirmative; and say, "We have received the Holy Ghost:" for on earth there is no securer way, than to

¹ Hos. xiv. 7. ² James i. 21. ³ Zech. xii. 10.
⁴ John vi. 63. ⁵ John vi. 35. ⁶ Psalm cxvi. 13.

